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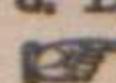
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THE UNKNOWN.

A TALE OF 1777.

BY N. C. IRON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

342 STELLA, THE SPY.

463 THE TWO GUARDS.

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THE UNKNOWN.

CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.

It was the night of a warm August day. The heavy clouds made darkness more profound ; through their dense masses not a star could be seen. The watch-fires of an army gleaming brightly in the distance, were surrounded by hundreds of reclining soldiers, and those who had escaped the calamities of the day were exulting in its glory. Upon the plain in front of these flaming beacons was exhibited a very different scene. This was the battle-field of the previous day, where still lay the g!astly dead, and both the despairing and the hopeful wounded, from the latter of whom, prompted by acute agony, would escape an occasional groan, however repugnant the cry might be to his manly feelings. Night, however, had, with her sable mantle, hidden these horrors from the eye, a fitting pall with which to canopy the dead ; but, to the tortured living it was a revelation that they must endure their sufferings till the approaching light. But they uttered no complaint. They had before fought battles and escaped uninjured, and, in the boundless joy of conquerors, had been themselves deaf to the groans of their companions on the first night of victory.

At a distance from these fires, yet still upon the gory plain, concealed beneath the needless shelter of a spreading tree, stood the figure of a youth. He was not more than fourteen years of age, though tall in stature ; but this elevation was attributable to his legs, which were disproportionately long. Solicitude was perceptible in his face as he gazed upon the plain. He seemingly feared that some one dear to him might be suffering there, whom his aid could preserve.

"Where is he ? Where can he be ?" the boy exclaimed. And then he forced forward his head, as if his eye could

penetrate darkness and distance too, in search of the object on whom his thoughts were fixed. After a long pause he resumed :

" He ain't there. He ain't upon the field. There's moans and groans, but he'd make nayther. If he'd a voice he'd on'y give the signal, and then he knows I'd fly to his side. No, he ain't in this here field."

Still, as if the speaker had no faith in his own words, he continued to listen for some reassuring sounds, as the wind blew toward his ear ; but nothing came which that practiced faculty could distort into the cry he sought. Then a fresh idea distracted his troubled mind.

" Be he dead ? Be he killed ?" he exclaimed.

And then, as this fear gained credence in his brain, he continued, in a most agitated voice :

" If thee be dead, come to me, Wrecker. Come to me as a ghost. Let me see thee again in some shape or other, and I swear to revenge thy death in red-coat blood."

There was no response to this morbid invocation, which seemed to revive a feeling of hope in the poor boy. Still looking upon the plain, he suddenly exclaimed :

" What's that ?"

As if the immortal shadow of his prayer had just passed before his eye. But he was not thus deceived. It was a light sparkling in the distance, about midway between himself and the watch-fires. It was fitful and unsteady, appearing and disappearing at short intervals, yet it seemed slowly to approach the spot where the strange figure stood.

" That light can't move alone," exclaimed the calm, clear-headed youth.

Nor could it, nor did it. It was borne by a woman of the camp, one of those fell hags that, like a vulture waiting until the field is strewn with victims, came forth in the dead of night to glut her demon appetite upon the dead. She had filled her coffers by pilfering the brave ; still the passion burned within her breast, and now, with gloating eye and savage heart, she stole across the gory plain, spurning with her crimsoned foot the private soldier, in her eagerness to rifle the body of his chief. This fiend was not unarmed. He carried a dagger by her side, that, if there were left so

much of the spark of life as to resist her will, she might be equal to the contingency. The lantern which lighted her to these deeds of horror was concealed from the soldiery at the fires by her ample drapery, and she did not fear detection from any other eye. Thus moved this woman, approaching nearer and nearer to the tree where the youth stood, with quickened pulse and hopeful heart, when the uniform of an officer caught her practiced eye. In an instant she was by his side. He was prostrate upon the earth, his head pillow'd upon the dead body of his horse. Faint from the loss of blood, and with one arm broken, he was unable to remove from the spot where he had fallen, and there lay in thirst and agony awaiting the coming day; but the light and the approach of footsteps gave him hope, which increased when he discovered the welcome figure of a woman.

"Good mother," said the officer, "give me water, for I thirst almost to death."

"What!" exclaimed the woman, "help a rebel sodger? That's agin my grain."

"Regard me as a dying man, good woman," replied the officer, in a weak voice, "and do not deny that which will restore my life."

"I'm no doctor," replied the woman; "I'm a searcher, 'pinted by Sir William, to take all val'ables from the dead and dyin', that if their friends 'ply for 'em they'll be found in honest hands, and not stolen by the boys that'll bury in the mornin'."

A shudder was the only response of the disabled officer, while he hastened to conceal within his coat something which he had been fondling. But he could not deceive the lynx eye of the woman at his elbow.

"Ye'r hidin' somethin', be ye?" exclaimed the wretch. "Give up them things, 'cordin' to Sir William's orders."

"Only with my life," responded the officer in a deep and solemn tone, as if he were prepared to abide by the alternative.

"Ho, ho," exclaimed the unscrupulous wretch, "there's no trouble about that; I'm allus ready for my part in sich cases."

As she said this she raised her dagger, that here the dialogue

might end. It did not glitter in the light ; it no longer bore the polish of pure steel, but still reeking with the blood of a previous victim, was about to drink the life-blood of another. The officer had no strength to struggle against this doom, and, with his treasure pressed still closer to his heart, he awaited the blow. There was no tardiness in the executioner, for the tigress was about to plunge the knife into his breast, when her arm was arrested by a sudden grasp, the fatal weapon wrested from her hand, and she herself hurled back with considerable force upon the bony carcass of the horse, where she rested in insensibility.

It was the boy, who, having stealthily advanced toward the light, soon became acquainted with the repulsive object of its bearer, and when she attempted to add murder to robbery, he leaped upon the criminal just in time to preserve a life to the republic. The officer was too feeble to speak his gratitude, and when, in obedience to a slight signal, the boy placed his ear close to the soldier's ear, the only word he could utter was :

"Water!"

The boy remembered stumbling against a canteen beneath the tree. He cast his wary eye upon the woman, in whom he perceived no symptoms of recovery, and then rushed in search of water. He soon found the flask ; but when he returned the eyes of the officer were closed. He bathed the sufferer's face, then raised his head, and placing the water to his lips, found that he began to drink. This soon revived him, and his thoughts quickly reverted to the debt he owed the boy.

"A soldier's thanks, brave boy," he exclaimed, "for the dauntless manner in which you saved me from the dagger of that hag."

"I couldn't see that thing done," replied the boy.

The officer, still supported by the boy, seemed too faint to continue the conversation, when the boy remarked :

"P'rhaps I could help ye to git away. 'Twill soon be day-light, and then them red-coats 'll be lookin' arter the wounded, and take you. There's in this bottle sunthin' that'll gi' ye strength," and taking a bottle from the ground, which had escaped from the woman's pocket when she fell, he applied it

to the lips of the exhausted soldier. It seemed to inspire him both with speech and hope of flight, for, securing the hidden treasure in his bosom by tightening his coat, he, with his one able hand, pressed that of his deliverer, and said :

" I am weak from loss of blood, and have one arm broken ; but with your assistance, my brave boy, and a diligent use of the next two or three hours of darkness, I might avoid the vigilance of these fellows."

" I'll help ye," replied the boy, " and I'm strong, too, and if ye'll just do a little, I'll do the rest."

With great tenderness the boy raised the officer from the earth, and placed him on his feet ; but he then found that in his generosity he had undertaken a difficult task, for the wounded officer was very feeble ; still the gallant lad had resolution and endurance in his courage, and by great exertion, assisted his charge to the tree whence he had first distinguished the light upon the plain.

" Rest here," said the boy, as he placed the sufferer upon the grass beside the tree, " and I'll rest too. The fight didn't reach thus far."

" Not the actual struggle," remarked the officer, " but the spot forms a portion of the field, from an incident that occurred just before I fell. When the fight commenced I was striving, with other portions of the rear-guard, to retard the enemy in pursuit. I was closely pressed by superior numbers, and was endeavoring to withdraw my men to the greater security of this shelter, when a most remarkable man, clad in the garb of a poor civilian, seeing the inequality of the struggle, rallied a number of the fugitives by the magic of his appeal, and made a most furious charge upon my rivals, and drove them to retreat. But in this assault my horse was killed, I was severely wounded, and my arm was broken. The shrewd eye of this gallant leader perceiving my lisabled state, he attempted to bear me off ; but at this instant a large cavalry force swept across the field, to the spot where I lay and instant retreat was ordered. I saw no more, and since that painful moment, amidst the dying and the dead, I have rested where you found me."

" Then he's get away," exclaimed the boy, who had listened to every word with the utmost eagerness.

"What," responded the astonished officer, "is that man known to you?"

"'Tis he I came here to look for," said the boy.

The attention of both was withdrawn from the subject at this point by some sudden noise. The boy looked toward the field whence he had come, when a repetition of the sound convinced him that it proceeded from an opposite direction. The boy listened attentively. It soon became not only more audible, but more distinct. As soon as he had ascertained by ear the cause of the alarm, he approached the officer:

"Keep squat," whispered the keen young scout; "somebody's comin', and I'll put he on 'nother scent."

"You have risked enough for me, my worthy boy," exclaimed the officer, "and you shall hazard no more. I see the danger to which my companionship exposes you, and it must not be. You know the country and can escape. I am so weakened that I can not move without more of your assistance than you can afford to render. Avail yourself of your agility and begone, and permit me not to upbraid myself as being the cause of your capture."

During this unheeded exhortation the boy had been receding from the officer, with his back toward the approaching sounds, describing with his arms and hands certain gyrations in the air, by which he meant to menace the listener into silence. These gesticulations continued until he disappeared.

Then the officer sank back against the tree, in sorrow at the generous obduracy of the boy; and his despondency was complete when, shortly after, he saw his deliverer advancing toward the tree, apparently chained by the hands to the saddle-bow of a horseman.

"A prisoner! Poor youth," the officer exclaimed, and then unable to contend longer against the acuteness of his feelings, he fell back upon the grass, utterly insensible.

more delicate. The situation required a steady and judicious mind, and the author of this narrative has done well in his choice of a subject, as it affords a good opportunity for the display of his talents, and the exercise of his judgment.

CHAPTER II.

AN ILLUSTRIOS VISITOR.

A FORTNIGHT previous to the incident related in the preceding chapter, three figures could be discerned upon a height which commanded a view of Chesapeake Bay. A man, a woman and a boy formed this party. Though dwelling together in a cabin that stood some yards in the background, there was no alliance between them but in community of residence. The woman was of great age, and so bent by the weight of years, that she was unable to walk without the assistance of a staff. She was known by the name of Mother Gray. Whether this appellation came from the height on which she lived—which was called “Gray's Hill”—or the hill was indebted to the crone for its name, was unknown to the oldest inhabitant of the neighborhood.

The man was about forty, of powerful stature and handsome features, though somewhat in decay. He was grave in manner, and a smile rarely or never displaced the furrows of sorrow which marked his face. He had found the cottage of Mother Gray at a period when scarcely another tenement stood within sight, and had prevailed upon the dame, only with much entreaty, to permit him to make her humble roof his home.

The boy was the child of poverty. Want was the only recollection of his infancy. From his extreme destitution he was delivered by the man, and carried to Gray's Hill, where he was received by the dame with great reluctance; but he soon became very useful to the aged matron, and this soon reconciled her to the incumbrance. He was now fourteen, and fully estimated the obligation which he owed the man and which he endeavored to repay by the utmost devotion to his interests.

These singular associates were clad in the humblest manner, and, although it was not believed by the country people around that there was poverty in the hut that occupied Gray's

Hill, nothing but the barest necessities of comfort were visible in the habitation. It was remarked that the man was absent for long periods, and that the only industry in which the boy engaged was in the tillage of the garden. But, what excited yet more surprise and not a little indignation, was the return, one day, of this mysterious man mounted upon one of the handsomest and fleetest horses ever seen in the locality. He sat the animal, not like the poor peasant that he was, but as one accustomed to feats of horsemanship. Much pains were taken to learn every point of this attractive animal and to publish the description far and near, in the hope that a claimant might appear for the magnificent steed ; but, no one seemed qualified to dispute the ownership, and the envied peasant remained in possession of his matchless horse. This man was known by the name of Wrecker.

These were the figures that, standing in relief upon the hill, gazed down upon the waters of the Chesapeake in wondrous astonishment at what was passing in the bay below. Well might they be surprised, for, up that usually quiet arm of the sea, impelled by the wind blowing freshly from the ocean, were hastening nearly two hundred sail of vessels. Though a novel sight to all, the man stood viewing the approach of this mighty fleet as if it were not an unusual sight for him. He was drawn up to his full height, his arms folded across his breast, and a half-visible sneer betrayed the contempt he entertained for this naval display of an invading enemy.

"What think you, Mother Gray," at length he said, "of this proud fleet ? It contains the British army, under Howe who intend to march hence upon Philadelphia. But, there is a strong arm between him and that great city, which he must disable before he reaches it. Washington is there, with the laurels of Trenton still green upon his brow, and that great man will not permit these legions to acquire the halls of Congress without superhuman efforts to resist them. Could he have foreseen this ocean stratagem, he would have been here to-day. Gray's Hill would have been his citadel, and from its heights he could have shattered some of their worthless galiots, and perhaps have rendered the numbers of our army more on an equality with the foe."

Mother Gray did not respond, nor did Wrecker seem to heed her silence. He evidently spoke more to unburden his troubled mind, than in the expectation of an answer from that good dame, who, resting on her staff, continued to look upon the vessels in the bay, although it was evident from her abstracted manner that her thoughts were not directed there.

As the figures still watched with unabated interest the progress of the fleet, a brilliant assemblage of naval and military officers were to be observed on the quarter-deck of the flagship. Among them were General Sir William Howe, Commander of the British land forces; his brother, Lord Howe, Admiral of the fleet; the fiery Lord Cornwallis; the imperturbable Knyphausen, leader of the Hessians. They were indulging in jocular conversation, and the navy was mockingly congratulating the military upon the non-appearance of an enemy, when the signal was given to cast anchor.

"There, gentlemen, is the place of debarkation for your troops," said the Admiral, "just at the junction of the bay with the Elk river. The country is favorable, the enemy is invisible, and its inhabitants are said to be non-combatant and peaceful. The distance, too, is but seventy miles from where the august Continental Congress sits. If you march but ten miles per diem your advance guard will behold the spires of Philadelphia in a week."

"You must not imagine, my lord," said Cornwallis, "that we shall have such lack of entertainment on the journey as to enable us to march with great rapidity. We must fight our way to the shrine of our pilgrimage, for, despite of the tranquillity now reigning here, I have no doubt but that before our feet touch the earth which Washington vows to free from monarchical rule, his tireless scouts will have whispered in his ear that we are in the bay."

"Cornwallis does not forget," smiled the Admiral, as he familiarly placed his hand on the shoulder of the General, "the shadow that this bold Virginian cast over his brightness upon the banks of the Delaware, last year."

"Although we perceive no enemy," interposed the considerate General Howe, in order to relieve Cornwallis from the too severe sarcasm of his brother, "there is doubtless some concerted scheme to oppose us on our march. Washington will

not allow us to gain, without a struggle, those precious steps of the State House from which was first read to the people that famous document they call the Declaration of Independence. We, however, have but to march cautiously, and I have no fear of the result."

"And be particularly careful of your commissariat," said the merry Admiral, "for to tempt the ragged legions of the Republic with food and raiment, would be like displaying a flock of sheep to ravenous wolves."

This group of officers did not escape the eagle eye of Wrecker. He even detected their movements as they pointed to the banks where there was no enemy to meet them. Turning hastily to the boy, he said, with impatience:

"Spider, have you seen any one on the plains since those ships have been in sight? My attention has been wholly engaged by other matters."

"Yes," replied Spider, "I see'd Will Swift there. He was a lookin' at them ships all the while, and then went off at a great rate."

"Then the General will learn of this invasion before the morning," replied Wrecker, "for I know no legs but those agile limbs of yours that can equal those of Willie Swift for pace. But, a time has now arrived, my boy, when you must give your services to your struggling country, that, when the fruit of liberty is ripe, you may not be disqualified to eat it."

"Tell me what to do," replied the poor boy, as a tear came in his eye, "and any thing between the highest mountain and the deepest valley I'll go over to do your orders. I'm good at travel, have long sight, and my ears are pretty well as useful at night as my eyes are by day. 'Ain't these of use to watch and listen to these Britishers."

"They are qualities needed at this crisis, Spider," replied Wrecker; "I know that you are, faithful, diligent, and true, and I will soon find ample occupation for your faculties."

Spider rubbed his hands with real joy; and he and Wrecker, leaving Mother Gray to the reverie in which she was still absorbed, spent most of that night in efforts to obtain a more certain estimate of the strength of the floating enemy.

Intelligence of the landing of the British forces soon spread through the country. Some of the country people had ventured to look upon their fires by night, and others, yet bolder, had caught glimpses of the camp by day. Thus a fabulous strength was given to the invaders. The frightened inhabitants, gathering their families and their more portable treasures, decamped from their peaceful homes, leaving, in many cases, their cattle grazing in the fields. This hasty and distressing exodus, however, excited the sympathy of the British General, who, in a proclamation, invited the people to return to their abandoned property, stating that he came not to war against peaceful citizens, but against those in arms. This assurance was not ineffective; many families returned, but others doubted its sincerity, and kept aloof.

On the evening following this invasion a party of horsemen were discovered riding at a brisk rate toward Gray's Hill. They were attired in private dresses, but wore swords by their sides and pistols in their holsters. They evidently shunned the observation of the British, to whom they occasionally made considerable *détours*, which their apparent knowledge of the country enabled them to do with safety. Whatever their ultimate object might be, their immediate aim was to reach Gray's Hill. When they had attained this commanding height they dismounted, and, leaving their horses in charge of their attendants, they clambered to the summit. Thence, from the concealment of a clump of trees, they surveyed the British army. Their study was long and penetrating, and none seemed inclined to undervalue their formidable host. One of this hidden party viewed those legions with individual interest, as if their numbers, their discipline, and their power of doing mischief were a matter personal to himself. After a time he removed the field-glass from his eye, when one of his companions said :

" What think you, General ? "

" That Howe is well backed in his march on Philadelphia," responded the General addressed.

" Have you thought of how he is to be disposed of ? " asked the same person.

" Nay," said the General, with a placid smile, " it is not so easy to dispose of nearly twenty thousand men, well armed

and skillfully commanded, when we have only about half that number for field duty."

"But, even with our nine thousand?" said the impatient speaker.

"We will fight them, Wayne," for it was Anthony Wayne, addressing George Washington, "but they must be harassed, weakened, and thinned of their great numbers, before we face them. My light infantry, that I sent to Gates, to assist him against Burgoyne, so dexterous, so untiring, and so well-drilled, would be invaluable for this purpose; but we must content ourselves with troops less expert."

"And consequently less destructive," remarked Wayne.

"Possibly less effective," observed Washington, in thoughtfulness; then brightening into a cheerful smile, he continued: "but, we yet have the gallant light horse, led by young Harry Lee. He will keep the enemy in perpetual trouble; for all that can be effected by a brave and fearless leader, devoted and daring followers, and fleet horses, will be done by him."

"Yes, it will prove a weary pilgrimage for Howe," said General Wayne, with the significant emphasis of one whose work was already half planned.

By this time the day was closing, and heavy rain had commenced to fall. The party descried the cottage of Mother Gray, and thither they directed their steps. As they reached the humble roof the dame was standing at the door, listlessly gazing at the storm.

"Will you afford us shelter, my worthy friend?" asked Washington.

"Willingly," replied Mother Gray, in a tremulous voice. "My room is large. I've space and chairs for all," and she receded from the door that the visitors might pass in. The company were soon seated; the storm increased; but, except the heavy patterning of the rain upon the tight roof, not a sound was heard, and the exhausted party were soon deep in slumber.

Three hours had transpired in undisturbed repose, when the string of the door was pulled, the wooden latch raised and a muffled figure entered. With mysterious and noiseless step it passed through the apartment to an adjoining room, where the aged dame was busily occupied in the preparation of a repast for the unconscious travelers. The figure

approached the woman, whispered a few sentences in her ear that much astonished her, then placed his finger on his lips, as if in token of silence, and returned to the room where the Generals slumbered.

"What a prize for Howe!" exclaimed the muffled figure who contemplated the sleeping foes of monarchy. "What revenge for the impetuous Cornwallis for the repulse at Trenton! What a galaxy to adorn a triumph! and, what fortune for one who would earn wealth by baseness! Was ever so poor a dormitory so graced by Morpheus? Wayne, Lafayette, Sullivan, and last and most glorious and dispassionate of men, the single-hearted Washington—"

"Ha! treachery! treachery! Draw, my friends! Defend yourselves! I have you, villain!"

These words were vociferated by Lafayette, as he suddenly awoke at the name of Washington, and, leaping from his chair, had seized the shadow of the figure on the wall, while the substance escaped without molestation through the open door. At this alarm the officers awoke, and, their memories still clouded, resorted to their arms; but so clumsily, that while one sought his sword, the other extended his hand to grasp his pistol at the holster, believing himself still seated in the saddle. To dissipate this confusion dame Gray appeared in the apartment with a light, and then Lafayette discovered that instead of having captured the traitor whom he challenged, he held in his grasp a horse-cloak that hung upon the wall, and upon which the shadow of the runaway had fallen. This increased the fears of Lafayette for the safety of Washington, and he exclaimed, addressing Mother Gray:

"Where is the villain who has just escaped, and who recognized our commander? Is he gone to betray us to the English? Where are our horses? My friends, let us leave this den."

"Gentlemen, be calm," said Mother Gray, with a tremor in her voice from the feebleness of age, "there is no need of all this terror. The man who just now left here, and who recognized you all, and pronounced the name of Washington, is as true to you as you are to your country. He whom you now accuse is incapable of treachery. He is most anxious for your safety, and is now watching the enemy that they

may not come up in you by surprise. He has stabled your horses, and unless he gives some signal of alarm, be assured that you need apprehend no danger. But, with the earliest light of morning you must leave, for the enemy on the plains are watchful and suspicious.

"Pardon, venerable madame," said the courteous Lafayette, who was disarmed of all suspicion at the explanation rendered. "I feel rebuked, and can only add that I place implicit faith in every word you have uttered."

The Generals, astonished at this address of the good dame, listened to her with much interest, and wondered what train of misfortunes could have exiled such a woman to so remote a locality as Gray's Hill. This incident rendered all but Washington rather timid; but, as the storm continued without abatement, they drew round the table and partook of the supper which had been prepared, although more than once regretting openly that they should cause so much toil to such aged hands.

The night passed without further alarm; but the Generals slept no more collectively. Individual dozes were indulged, but at least one of the party acted as sentinel. With the first blush of morning the horses were at the door. The adventurous patriots were soon in the saddle. In bidding adieu to Mother Gray, General Washington said:

"Farewell, most worthy hostess. I shall ever retain a pleasant and grateful recollection of this night. But, I should have been glad to see that excellent man who, recognizing us so early in the night, and knowing our value to the enemy, could resist a temptation to betray before which even Judas fell—one of the chosen disciples of our Lord—and prefer integrity and poverty to gold."

"You will see him, General," exclaimed the dame, "his ye is ever on his country's good."

"Tell him," said Washington, leaning from his saddle, and whispering in the ear of Mother Gray, "that he is my friend forever."

CHAPTER III.

THE SIGNAL EFFORT AND THE SIGNAL FAILURE.

THE ring of horses' hoofs could still be heard as the officers descended Gray's Hill, when the vigilant sentinels appeared before the door of the hut, which had so recently sheltered General Washington. The bent figure of dame Gray stood at the entrance, with her eyes upon the earth, revolving in her mind the last words that Washington had uttered. She repeated them to Wrecker, relating the circumstances under which they were spoken. The severe and thoughtful face relaxed into a smile.

"Washington is great in his rewards," he said. "He gives them from his heart; and believes that it is possible for a poor sentinel to be better recompensed by his friendship than by his gold. And he is right: for, while I would have cast his gold into the sea, where the British navy floats, I will cherish his words as long as I have life."

The trio entered the hut, now made sacred by having been the sanctuary of Washington, and the dame soon furnished her hungry friend with a good repast. Then they soon yielded to the fatigues of the night, and Wrecker, without removing his drenched clothing, or even retiring from the chair on which he sat, sunk into a profound slumber. Spider, the better to provide for the greater freedom of his lengthy arms and legs, though indifferent to the hardness of his couch, stretched himself upon the floor, and reposed, like a faithful dog, at the feet of his generous master.

Dame Gray, who had partaken of the wakefulness of the night, now resolved to share in the slumber of the day, and retired to her bed. Then the household was at rest, and might have so remained but for a thundering knock upon the door. Spider leaped to his feet. Wrecker's eyes were opened; but he was not otherwise discomposed, although the noise without continued. Addressing Spider, he said:

"Open the door to those noisy English. They will not be denied, and we had better not exasperate them by resistance."

"That's right," said a voice, encouragingly, as Spider commenced to remove the bars, "banish your fears, my friends, for I promise you safety in the name of the Proclamation. We don't come here to injure the defenseless. What? who?" continued the voice, as the door swung back upon its hinges, and disclosed the strange figure of Spider in the interval, "What are you?"

The speaker, a non-commissioned officer in a British regiment, was apparently on a strolling adventure. Having put aside for the time the stern character of the warrior, he was disposed to visit the residences of the farmers, confirming, verbally, the powers of the Proclamation, trusting to the hospitality of the inhabitants for reward. Spider laughed as he beheld the consternation of the soldier at his anatomical disproportions. He did not speak, but beckoned the visitors forward. There was a disinclination to accept the courtesy, although he had created so noisy a clamor to effect an entrance. Dame Gray, who had risen, hastened to the door, and demanded of the soldier his wishes. At the appearance of the venerable matron, the hesitation of the errant Briton subsided, and he prepared to reply to the question.

"Well, for the matter o' that, I'm a stranger in the country, quartered in the valley, and so thought I'd just call on a neighbor or two."

"So you buckled on your sword, walked up here, and almost battered down the door to gain admission," replied the lady, with sternness.

"But the sword is in the scabbard, dame," responded the soldier, "and there 'twill remain. Look at the Proclamation, and you'll find that we draw upon none but them that draw on us."

Mother Gray said no more, and the soldier entered the house as she withdrew from the door.

There sat Wrecker upon his chair. He had watched the proceedings, although he had remained unmoved. The soldier soon espied him, and said:

"Good day, friend. That's a queer boy o' yours."

"He is faithful," responded Wrecker.

"Well," replied the soldier, with a smile at his own facetiousness, "the richest jewel don't allus bave the smartest

case, and sure there's nothin' flatterin' in his, that I can perceive."

"No," responded Wrecker, "his polish is in his heart.

"And there seems mighty little space for any great development there," replied the merry soldier, as he gazed upon the diminutive size of Spider's body.

"You are from below," remarked Wrecker, sharply, evidently impatient at this repartee.

"Yes, friend," he replied, "I'm a Sergeant in the 40th foot, a regiment well known to fame. I'm an Englishman, though my name is Holland; but, why we was called after that 'philious country, I never knowed."

"And pray, what made you visit this poor cottage?" asked Wrecker.

"Accident, my friend, accident," replied the Sergeant. "I climbed up here that I might look down upon the strength of England—the fleet of Lord Howe and the army of Sir William. They are so imposin' and so grand from high places."

"And do you not moralize as you gaze upon this proud array, that a puff of wind from Him who agitates the elements would doom to destruction the whole of that fleet, or that the army of Washington—for you have to encounter this grim impediment to your occupation of Philadelphia—may not, before many days, convert your dashing companions into retreating fugitives?"

The fearless Sergeant had not thus reflected. He had been taught to believe that their road was paved with victory; and, now that no enemy appeared, and they had landed but seventy miles from the goal, he had little doubt but that the triumph would be achieved simply by marching on. The suggestions of his inquisitor were annoying to the soldier's pride. The language which he used, too, was by no means consonant with the character of the humble abode, and the Sergeant regarded him with an eye of suspicion. He thought it might be some great man—even Washington himself—and his ready mind soon settled upon a plan of action; but it was first necessary to withdraw from the hut. This he did by affecting to have lost something, remarking to Wrecker:

"I will return in one minute, friend, for I must see after some'at I'd not like to lose."

He quitted the room ; but there was one present who could read a countenance as a scholar could a book. Untaught, and youthful as he was, Spider possessed a sagacity that rarely erred. He saw suspicion lurking in the soldier's act, and stealthily followed him from the cottage, that, whatever steps he pursued to the prejudice of Wrecker, they might be baffled. The sudden departure did not appear to disturb the chief personage of the scene. He remained upon his chair as if in deep reflection ; but no sooner had the last footstep of the soldier died in the distance, than he leaped from his chair, seized a brace of pistols, and, rushing out, was soon upon a ledge of rock that commanded a view of the British army. Thence he descended to a lower ledge, where he paused, but soon perceived the gallant Sergeant advancing by a path beneath. They soon met. The soldier was astounded and discomfited ; but Wrecker assisted the Sergeant in regaining his composure.

" My friend, I'm astonished at findin' you here," was the Briton's first salutation.

" Why so ?" replied Wrecker. " I have been reviewing the British army from this height ; but I must admit that its magnificence does not increase in distance. Its vessels are but full-rigged boats, its men mere figures, and its horses rats. Where is the grandeur of all this ? Yonder are the quarters of your General—a mere kennel in the distance ! To the left those of Cornwallis—a palace for a doll ! Do you distinguish some dragoon horses near the quarters of Cornwallis ? They were mounted by troopers just now, who vaulted into the saddle with the agility and readiness of men who anticipated some greater feat than the performance of their ordinary duty. Their horses heads are turned toward the point you came from."

" I saw them," exclaimed the Sergeant ; " why did they dismount ?"

" Nay," replied Wrecker, playing with his pistols, which his companion eyed with uneasiness, " why did they mount ?"

This question was accompanied by a searching glance, as if to fathom how deep an agency the Sergeant had in the distant movement of the dragoons. The soldier shrunk from the scrutiny. Although a veteran of many battles, he stood

vanquished before a single foe, who employed no other weapon than his eyes. Wrecker saw the blanched cheek of the false soldier.

"Well may you feel abashed, for you are detected. Had these dragoons urged their horses toward this hill, as *you* invited them, the English army would have fought the approaching battles without their Sergeant Holland."

At this juncture Spider appeared. He carried in his hand two small signal flags, which he had plucked from the spot where the perfidious Sergeant had placed them, and which had so quickly attracted the attention of the troopers. The soldier recognized the colors, and it was at once plain to him why his signal had so suddenly been disregarded. They had been removed by Spider.

"You need not fear," continued Wrecker, "you are safe. We can be as generous as we are vigilant; but your gratitude is due to Spider, for had he not so dexterously frustrated your treachery, the contents of these pistols would have been your death-warrant."

Wrecker immediately withdrew. The Sergeant, however, was not insensible to the mercy he had so suddenly experienced.

"Spider," he exclaimed, as that personage was about to quit the scene, "who's that man?"

"Wrecker."

"Tell me his real name," implored the Sergeant, "that I may remember him with gratitude."

"He's no other name," said Spider.

"Well, well," replied the Sergeant, "I've no right to your confidence; but tell him I'll never forget his kindness, and that, so long as Sergeant Holland lives in the 40th, neither he nor you'll want a friend in the British army."

Spider had been gradually withdrawing as the soldier spoke, and, with the last words, he wholly disappeared, while the British veteran, deeply impressed with the occurrences of the hour, marched thoughtfully to his quarters in the valley.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE.

FOR eight days the British army remained on the banks of the noble bay where it had landed. Its tents whitened the green valley of the Chesapeake, and converted its verdant pastures into a field of Mars. The soldiery were not idle. Some were occupied in landing their stores and armaments, which the sailors transferred from ship to shore. Others were picketed at distant outposts, their eyes jealously watching the country around, that they might detect the enemy's approach, amusing themselves with derisive badinage because that enemy did not come. Many regiments were at drill, others were seen marching through the streets and alleys formed by the canvas dwellings, toward a large space, where several brigades were assembling to be reviewed. Indeed, there did not seem an idler in the camp. Throughout the day the drum and bugle were heard speaking in a shrill, wild dialect, that none but soldiers can fully comprehend, instructing the troops from hour to hour, in every action of their obedient lives. At night, the bugle and drum commanded the giant army to repose. Then he slept. Then the watch-fires burnt in solitude; the voice of the flame was audible, while the buoyant smoke writhed in the air like a troubled life. The sentinels, too, those patient guardians of the night paced their lone beats in measured steps, and though awed by the solemnity of this deep sleep of thousands, stole anxious glances to the east to see if day were coming.

The ninth day was the day of marching—the day on which the first step was to be taken toward the Halls of Congress. At dawn the men arose. Tents were struck, and in one hour the canvas city was in ruins. The avenues and streets no longer were to be distinguished, for the structures, which sheltered eighteen thousand men, were transferred from the plain to the wagons, before the tenants had dispatched their breakfasts.

The soldiery were massed upon the site of their late camp

with colors flying, and, to the deafening noise of the drum and fife of every regiment, the army moved forward.

Wrecker had seen all that occurred from his hut upon the hill, and the stealthy Spider had made one or two visits near the lines of the British to ascertain where the 40th were quartered, that he might know the locality of the repentant Sergeant. In this he had succeeded; but the knowledge was scarcely worth the effort, as the distance between the hill and the encampment was too great to distinguish one soldier from another.

On the morning of the departure of the British army from the Chesapeake, Spider dashed breathlessly into the hut to inform Wrecker that every tent was down, and he, imagining that Washington might have repeated the stratagem of Trenton, and fallen upon his glittering enemy and destroyed him, rushed to the point which commanded a view of the British. But his hopes were dissipated, for he perceived that the enemy were preparing to advance. The Generals were already on the field. Howe and Cornwallis, attended by their respective staffs, rode side by side, as if in consultation, and at the head of the German mercenaries rode the Hessian Knyphausen. It was a gorgeous sight—this march of thousands. The sun shone with great splendor, and the forest of bayonets reflected its fiery rays in dazzling brilliancy upon the vessels, the water, and the distant hills, while the gaudy trappings of the soldiers and the handsome uniforms of the officers, gave additional luster to one of the most magnificent displays of military pageantry ever exhibited upon these ancient shores. As these masses moved forward with an orderly, firm and willing step, Wrecker deeply commiserated the nearly destitute and yet unseen multitude assembled to oppose them. But he felt resigned when he reflected that the prudence and caution of their leader were commensurate with his boldness and decision, and that, while the former qualities would foster and protect his feeble army, the latter would never expose it to needless peril.

When this powerful force had become less distinct by distance, and the sound of their clamorous music no longer reached his ear, Wrecker remarked to his companion:

"Now, Spider, comes our period of action. The object

of Washington, and of every true American, like you and I, to prevent these men from reaching Philadelphia. We must contribute our aid in the patriotic work. We must watch that enemy with unceasing vigilance, that his secret movements, in which he is not inexpert, may be defeated before any distressing consequences can ensue."

Spider smiled at this commission of his master. He loved activity, and this promised it in abundance. If he loved his country it was through Wrecker, for, toward him, he entertained unceasing gratitude. He performed his every wish with scrupulous care, and the great pleasure of his life was to think him satisfied. Although there was great awkwardness in the poor boy's person, there was much correctness in his mind. He had faculties, too, which fitted him for the duties now assigned him. His sense of sight was scarcely exceeded by the penetration of the eagle, and his power of travel was equal to that of animal endurance; while, in foresight and sagacity he was far beyond his youthful age.

"Thank ye," cried the boy, to Wrecker, "thank ye to trust me so. I'll 'dever to do my duty. I'll look well to them scarlet coats, and if they separate I'll keep track of both divisions."

"That is precisely what I want, good Spider," exclaimed Wrecker, with animation; "you comprehend all that is necessary before I explain. The main object is to keep a watchful eye upon this army, that, by their wily schemes and stratagems, they may not take our General at disadvantage."

In such preparatory conversation, Wrecker and his *protégé* returned to the hut; but not long to remain, for, in another hour, the only inmate of this lonely dwelling was old Mother Gray.

The British army pursued its way. The country, though level, was intersected with innumerable streams, which impeded its advance; but these geographical detentions were not the only foes to its progress. Washington, who had been so long invisible, had appeared, and, with his indomitable light horse and rifles, annoyed the enemy incessantly. The forces of Washington daily increased, but receded as the British cautiously approached, though frequently making demonstrations of a stand where the ground was favorable.

Thus, the British steadily advancing and Washington stubbornly retreating, the belligerents reached the Brandywine. This river is about twenty-six miles from Philadelphia. Washington resolved to dispute its passage. He had some thousands of men fewer than his antagonists; their discipline was inferior, and their arms and appointments were defective; till, with this rudimentary army he was determined to defend the Senate of his country, whose bold enunciations, uttered in the halls threatened with invasion, had encouraged the people of America to defend the rights of man.

Upon these banks the belligerents now stood, front to front; and, on the 15th of September, the struggle commenced. The combat was opened by General Knyphausen, who, with his Germans, maintained a heavy fire of artillery upon Washington's center, which was posted on the opposite shore. The movement was begun at Chadd's Ford, and the firing was replied to from the American side with considerable vigor; but the Germans made no attempt to cross. Noise and smoke were for many hours the only consequence of the fierce cannonade, and to the Americans it seemed strange for what purpose the firing was protracted. Above and below the center were other fords, which were respectively guarded by the right and left divisions; but, no attempt had been made to force either of these. Still higher up the river was a fork, formed by two rivers which contributed their waters to the Brandywine, and upon these were other fords.

Above this fork, and on the American side of those two rivers which formed it, could be seen a figure striding over the rugged plain toward a distant wood. There was at that moment no other person in view; but the pedestrian took furtive and anxious glances toward several slight hills beneath the shelter of which something caused him apprehension; while his crane-like legs afforded him such length of stride that his rate of progress was marvelous to behold. He reached the wood in safety, and the next moment was hidden in its foliage. It was the diligent Spider, who, pregnant with important news, sought in that forest labyrinth his less vigilant patron. Quickly he reappeared, accompanied by Wrecker, upon whose features could be distinguished symptoms of alarm. Spider pointed in the direction of a hollow

that intervened between the wood which sheltered them and the hills, along which were seen advancing thousands of armed men.

"Enough," said Wrecker, turning in haste toward his horse, which was just perceptible beyond the trees. "Now Fleetfoot, the safety or destruction of our army may rest with you."

"There's danger there," exclaimed Spider in agony, as he clasped the horse's rein; "you'll be musket shot if you leave the wood here. Go to t'other side."

"What, Spider," exclaimed Wrecker, "and *lose two minutes* at this most fearful crisis! No, no, I will not thus disgracefully attempt to shield my life. I will attempt the passage. Let them fire, and if I fall, then hasten to Chadd's Ford with all the speed of those ample legs of yours. Strain every nerve to reach it before those bayonets, for, if that stealthy movement be untold, Philadelphia is lost and Washington defeated."

"But, if they shoot you?" ejaculated the poor boy, as he pressed the hand of his master, with agony depicted in his face.

"Then I fall in a cause which will do honor to my grave," replied Wrecker, with solemnity. "But, Spider, I should not leave you friendless, as I found you. There are papers at the cottage which recommend you to one who will cherish you for your faithfulness to me."

He gently smiled upon the disconsolate boy, and, giving his horse the rein, dashed with the speed of a meteor along the defile. He was seen. There was a moment of suspense, both at the suddenness with which this horseman emerged from the wood, and that one should thus court the ordeal of death.

That moment of hesitation saved the bold rider. A hundred bullets followed upon his track. He heard their fearful shriek as they passed him in the air, but they left both man and horse uninjured.

In the meanwhile the bloodless assault at Chadd's Ford was prosecuted by the British. A deafening cannonade was maintained, and one or two feints were made at crossing the river, but they were so easily repulsed that Washington

began to suspect that all this show of battle was only a mask to some less playful design. Under this apprehension he dispatched one of his staff to the fork to ascertain if any attempt to cross were visible there ; but, the mischief contemplated by his antagonists was proceeding beyond and above that point, and the aid returned to the General to report no enemy in that direction. While the mind of Washington was still dissatisfied, a horseman was seen approaching at prodigious speed. The animal was white with foam and the rider was evidently the bearer of tidings of such importance as made him regardless of the challenge of the sentinels, whom he had passed in defiance of their threats. Several officers rode toward him, when he reined in his horse, and exclaimed, with energy :

"Where is the General ? I have intelligence of the most important nature. Let me see General Washington instantly, for in five minutes the enemy's cannon will be *booming in your rear !*"

The officers smiled in derision as they listened to the seemingly wild words of this excited man, who, dressed in the coarsest homespun, thought to impose upon their experienced minds this fable of the British ; but, at this juncture Washington rode up. He had heard of the approach of some messenger with intelligence, and advanced to meet him. In an instant Wrecker—for he was the horseman—addressed the General :

"Is it so difficult to gain credence here ? Your officers spurn me because I come with information which they have failed to obtain. *The enemy is in your rear, sir, close at hand !*"

"It seems to me impossible, my good friend," replied the General, "for I have but this instant received intelligence from a trusted officer whom I dispatched on an inspection as far up the river as the river fork, that the enemy was nowhere to be seen."

"True, General ; but the foe crossed *beyond* the fork—some thousands strong—led by the wary Cornwallis. They fired on me as I quitted the wood where I was concealed to endeavor to inform you. I only escaped death by a miracle to bear the intelligence to you."

Washington studied the speaker minutely, and looked directly into his unshrinking eye. Then, unlike his officers, he believed him truthful ; but, he was convinced also that those coarse garments were assumed but in disguise.

"Intelligence borne here at the venture of your life is not to be treated with discredit," replied Washington in the hearing of his officers. "I believe your statement, though it is most alarming."

"Then believe also in the imminence of the danger," rejoined Wrecker. "Behold my noble horse—see his exhausted state ; yet I have ridden but a few miles, and the enemy when I started were at my heels."

"What is your name ?" asked Washington.

"Wrecker," replied the speaker.

"Are you a resident in these parts ?" continued the General.

"Sometimes," replied Wrecker.

During these latter questions Washington was writing upon a tablet, which he delivered to one of his staff to be borne to the right wing to order it instantly to the rear, and no sooner was that done than a field-piece was heard booming in the distance. It was the advance of the British. It was understood by more than Washington, for Knyphausen now redoubled his fire, and, at the same time, made serious efforts to cross the river. In this he was opposed by the bravery of the American center ; but, the reserve with which they were to be supported having been ordered to the rear to meet the British there, they gradually retired, and the German became master of the river's banks.

Wrecker now found himself in the midst of battle, unarmed and unattached, but he was not dismayed at his position, though he already feared that the strength and discipline of the British would secure to them the advantage in the struggle. Washington, seeing how greatly he was outnumbered, gradually fell back ; but his soldiers fought well and stubbornly, and only yielded inch by inch to their well armed and sturdy foes. At the close of the day the Americans, exhausted and without food, fled in sad disorder toward Chester ; they could then no longer be recognized as the army that had fought so manfully all day.

Wrecker was not idle in the battle. He had joined the army in the morning as a courier; but had maintained the character of a warrior during the day. He had at an early period armed himself with the sword of a dying trooper, and busied himself in rallying men whom he perceived in disorder, and leading them back to the charge at some fortunate crisis, until he and his fiery steed were known throughout the field. In these efforts he had gradually retreated to a spreading tree, the foremost object of a wood. From this point he first viewed the battle as lost, although many brave soldiers still contended against the advancing foe. Among the latter was a gallant Captain of light-horse, who, despairing of victory, seemed to be using every effort to retard pursuit. In this brave service his gallant troops fought unflinchingly against double their number. Wrecker admired the ardent spirit of this youthful leader, and, rallying a few men who were flying from the field, he led on a bold and successful charge which drove back the enemy; but, the victory was only for a moment. The British were quickly reinforced and returned yet stronger to the charge, when Wrecker in turn reluctantly withdrew, leaving the brave young officer, to secure whom he had advanced, wounded or dead upon the field. Although thus driven from his object, he resolved to return at a later period of the night and rescue the young spirit if it lived.

Howe certainly was the victor, although in a far less degree than he had hoped. By the circuitous route in his strategic movement to the American rear, he expected both to avoid detection and to destroy, at a blow, this section of the army; but, the tireless watchfulness of Spider and the audacity of Wrecker defeated this reasonable anticipation, and saved the great mass of this motley army for future victories.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

THE incident narrated in the first chapter occurred on the field of Brandywine.

When the sun had set upon this groaning field, and the crimsoned earth was hidden in the darkness of night, Wrecker was still in the saddle. He had rendered eminent services during the fight; but even when the retreat could no longer be prevented, he disdained to fly, although his single arm could effect no change in the misfortune of the day. He soon perceived that the English, proud of their achievement, and not disposed to follow up the victory by inordinate pursuit, preferred to enjoy the laurels of the day upon the field.

Wrecker felt comparative safety in that neighborhood, and rode round their not very closely guarded lines, hoping to render assistance to such wounded soldiers as might have fallen in the retreat. Directing his course toward the tree already alluded to, he proceeded by a narrow path in the deep silence of the wood, where a sound attracted his attention that he could not attribute to the breeze occasionally moving the branches of the trees. He reined in his horse; but the noise was hushed. He was not, however, satisfied, but still felt that a friend or foe was near. In order to be assured that it was not the former, before he attempted to escape, he drew from his pocket a small whistle on which he blew a low but searching blast. In an instant there was a rush among the underwood as if a wolf had been driven from his lair, and something unseen in the darkness bounded to his side.

"Wrecker!" it exclaimed with a joyous voice.

"Spider!" responded the well-pleased horseman.

"I'm so glad you be safe," said spider, "I ha' bin alookin' afer ye all th' night till now."

"You can not be more gratified than I am to find you unhurt," replied Wrecker. "I came here with a hope to assist the wounded, especially a young officer whom I saw fall upon a spot not very far from here."

"Did he belong to the Light-hoss?" asked Spider.

"He did," replied Wrecker. "Have you seen any thing of him?"

"Yes," said Spider, "he's under that big tree, where the wood ends."

Wrecker put his horse in motion, and Spider, with great delight, went dancing by his saddle. They approached the tree by which the young officer had been supported, and, to the alarm of Spider, his patient was found prostrate on the earth. Wrecker leaped from his horse, and the officer was soon raised.

"It is many hours since he was wounded," remarked Wrecker, "and he is most probably weak from loss of blood. We must have a light that we may bandage those bleeding places or we shall not save his life."

A light was soon struck, and the wounds bandaged. The injured arm was carefully set by Wrecker, without the officer exhibiting a symptom of returning consciousness. During the operation a locket fell from the breast of the officer. Now that every attention had been bestowed upon the officer within the narrow art of these inexperienced nurses, Spider raised the fallen locket from the earth and was about to replace it as he buttoned the breast-coat of the wounded man when Wrecker exclaimed :

"What is that?"

Spider handed him what proved to be the miniature of a lady beautifully set in jewels. The master was about to return it with indifference, when the light shining upon the features it attracted his closer scrutiny. As he gazed upon it a strong anger was pictured upon his face and his bosom heaved with indignation.

"How came this soldier with this shadow?" he exclaimed in passion.

The astounded Spider could not respond. But Wrecker wanted no reply. He had spoken as to himself in his great ire. He directed Spider to return the miniature to the place whence it had fallen. He would not retain it. He could not staunch the blood and pilfer from the same person. Wrecker remained a few minutes in deep thought. Then he added, in a subdued voice :

"Spider, we must place him on the horse, and you must also mount and support him there. It is our only means of progress."

The senseless man was placed with great care upon the steed with Spider, while Wrecker led the animal slowly forward. They chose the most secluded ways, and it was long before another word was spoken, so deeply was the mind of Wrecker engaged in the scene of the previous hour. At length, when far distant from the field, he asked :

"Is there a house near, to which, with any safety, we could convey this poor fellow?"

"There's Obadiah Prim's," responded Spider: "but he's dead agin fightin'."

"Still he may be a kind and humane man, who would not refuse shelter to a suffering brother," replied Wrecker. "We will try him."

The soldier continued insensible, and the groans he uttered did not arise from any pain he endured. They raised him in their arms, and, with all possible gentleness, conveyed him to the door of the Quaker homestead. The noise of their approach brought Obadiah to the entrance.

"What want ye, friends," he demanded, "at this unseasonable hour?"

"We come to ask you to receive into your house a poor wounded soldier whom we have found upon the road," replied Wrecker.

"A wounded soldier!" repeated Obadiah in astonishment. "Why bring such a suppliant to my threshold? I detest the carnage of the battle-field, and all those who follow in that unholy pastime."

"We found him helpless and insensible on the road, abandoned by his fellows," said Wrecker, with energy. "We did not weigh the principles by which he fell. His sufferings touched our hearts and we acted. We knew not that there was an inhospitable home in this wide district."

"Friend," replied the Quaker, with unruffled mien, "thou art warmer in thy reproof than might be expected from the ripeness of thy years; and the severity of thy strictures would be better received by him whom thou wouldest teach if they were accompanied with less mistrust. But, as my

door is opened, it shall not be closed until the lame can walk or the wounded healed, and if thou and thy strange friend are wearied by thy day's journey, thou art free to partake of the bread of Obadiah Prim. Bring in thy burthen and deposit him on a bed which I will prepare."

Wrecker said no more. He found that Obadiah, despite his peculiarities, had a generous heart. Bearing the burden in their arms they followed the Quaker to an obscure room in a rather rambling house. There they deposited him upon a comfortable bed, and, without any remark, the quaint host began to examine the insensible patient with the expertness of a surgeon. He soon pronounced that there was no very troublesome injuries but the broken limb. That he reset and bandaged, thus exemplifying in truth the good Samaritan. His heart was as equal to the hospitality as his hand was to the emergency of the occasion.

These duties being performed and the patient in repose, Obadiah and Wrecker retired from the room, leaving it in possession of the assiduous Spider. In the eating apartmen Wrecker was introduced to the Quakeress sister, Ruth, a quaint maiden of forty, who expressed much sympathy for the sufferer, but shared her brother's antipathy to war.

When the soldier awoke from his slumber to consciousness, he gazed around the silent room in astonishment, felt his bandaged and wounded arm, grasped the miniature as if it were needful to his life, and then riveted his attention upon the figure of his chamberlain—Spider. Having taken a review of all things and endeavored to remember the occurrences of the previous day, he demanded :

"Where am I?"

"In the house of a friend," responded Spider.

"Then I am not a prisoner?" said the stranger.

"No," was the next response.

A smile of satisfaction shot over the sufferer's face, and he soon extracted from Spider all the circumstances of his presence there. Then he fell into a long and painful reverie, as if there were something on his mind. After a long silence, he again addressed Spider :

"When do you leave here?" he asked.

"P'raps in the morning, p'raps to-morrow night."

"Where are you going?" continued the stranger.

"P'raps to Chester—p'raps to Philadelphia," said the doubtful Spider.

"Would you convey a letter for me to Philadelphia?" asked the soldier.

"Yes, if Wrecker don't object," said Spider.

"Who is Wrecker?" inquired the soldier.

"He that took me from the streets—the best man in the world," said Spider.

"You have a high estimate of this man," said the soldier, "but he will not object, for the letter is harmless, and free from political or warlike intelligence. It is to a lady."

"I guess he'd let me do't," remarked Spider.

"No doubt," replied the soldier, "as it will be in your road, and I will pay you liberally for your trouble; but you must place the letter in the hands of the lady for whom it is intended. She resides with her aunt, who has a large house in Philadelphia, but you must not deliver it to *that* lady. You must insist on seeing *Miss Cavendish*, and it must pass from *your* hands into *hers*."

At the open door of the apartment stood Wrecker, leaning against the wall, his lip curled in indignation, and his whole frame agitated. He advanced into the room, and addressing the prostrate soldier, said:

"Young man, I have accidentally heard the commission with which you would charge that boy, and despite his willingness to be your mercenary, I forbid it. His time must be otherwise occupied than in carrying billets between hell and heaven. Nor is there less danger attached to the bearer of such surreptitious letters than to the writer, when the former is directed to avoid the disreeter lady of the house, the more easily to beguile the folly of the younger."

"Use more considerate language," said the soldier. "The morals of your boy would not have suffered in my service for, though I desired him to avoid the older lady, it was less to conceal the circumstance of my writing, than that my letter might not get into her possession."

"I ask not for your reasons," responded Wrecker, with no less sternness. "I know something of this family—enough to feel an interest in its welfare. I know both aunt and niece,

and how, sir, do you think that the comfort and happiness of the young lady will be improved by a union with a poor Captain of Light-horse?"

The soldier was offended by this impertinence; but, it was forcible in truth. He winced beneath the thrust of this relentless man, and though he felt great indignation at the humiliating position in which this coarse-clad censor had placed him, he nevertheless curbed his anger, and replied with composure:

"If you know aught of the younger of the two, you must be aware that there is no great disparity in wealth between one whom you term a 'a poor Captain of Light-horse and a young lady who is dependent upon a proud and wayward aunt for the very bread she eats."

"There is no such dependence of the niece upon the aunt," exclaimed Wrecker, in anger; then, checking his warmth of anger, he added, "at least I am well informed that these two ladies stand in different pecuniary relations to those you have described; but, of Helena Cavendish, I wish to hear no more than in the few questions I may ask. In the first place, I should like to be favored with your name?"

"That I freely give," replied the soldier; "it is Oscar Pembroke, a Captain in Harry Lee's Light-horse."

"I will trouble you with one more question," continued the inquisitor. "I believe you will reply with candor. Has Miss Cavendish afforded any encouragement in your suit?"

"By what right do you ask me this?" asked the soldier.

"Speak not to me of authority," exclaimed the inflexible Wrecker. "Do you refuse to answer, or shall I apply to her?"

There was something in the persuasive energy of his manner that was even more absolute than his words. Oscar hesitated for a few moments, and then said:

"I believe I am wrong to indulge your insolence, which a less patient man would not have so long tolerated; but rather than permit Miss Cavendish to be assailed by such provoking rudeness, I will acknowledge that I have avowed my affections to that lady; and have reason to rejoice at my good fortune, and now that I am absent from my regiment and may be reported wounded, killed, or dying, I am anxious that information should be conveyed to Philadelphia that I am but little injured."

Wrecker paused a few moments in thought, during which the sternness of his countenance relaxed, and then he said :

" You have no doubt spoken with candor, though with reluctance. The boy shall deliver your letter—a few lines—a mere statement of your injury and present health. Let it be written now, for, before your camp will awaken to bury its ghastly dead—of which you would have been of the number but for the ready hand of Spider—we shall be on our way. Farewell ! We may meet again ; but remember that Washington is still between the British army and Philadelphia, and that he wants every bold heart that loves his country."

Wrecker quitted the room.

Oscar mused : " An indefinable feeling inclines me to reverence that man, although he has extracted a secret from my heart, by threats and insolence deserving of punishment, and which I now blush at having surrendered. I part from him with regret, yet feel glad that he is gone. I wish to meet him again, yet seem to distrust him. So paradoxical is man."

Supported by the pillows of his couch, he penned the following :

" HELENA : I have cherished those last words of yours, as Heaven does its saints. Nor do I forget how those bright eyes responded to the silver tones of your lips. You have heard of the battle and of our overthrow. You may have heard that I am among the missing, or, rumor may even number me with the slain. I was stricken in the bloody field, but escaped with only a broken arm. Good Samaritans passing where I lay, conducted me to the asylum where I write—the residence of a benevolent Quaker and his sister—Ruth and Obadiah Prim. In a few days I hope to be again in the saddle, and at the head of my gallant troop, where I entreat for some of those tonics which render agreeable the hardness of a soldier's pillow. May I entreat you to send them by the bearer who, by-the-by, is a *protégé*—although most unlike him in personal advantages—of a *quondam* friend of yours, named Wrecker ; but who now affects almost the authority of a guardian. I am at his mercy for the delivery of this letter. He has also had the audacity to restrict me to terms in writing, and I have had the cowardice to submit, rather than you should

shed a tear for one almost uninjured ; but I will, nevertheless, so far break the compact as to declare myself,

"Your devoted, OSCAR."

This letter was duly consigned to Spider ; then the writer gradually fell into a slumber, and when, in the morning, he awoke, he was told that his rescuers had left many hours before.

The bandaged arm no longer confined Oscar to his bed, and he spent two or three pleasant days with the amiable Ruth and Obadiah. Then he spoke of leaving, and mentioned to the Quaker the indispensable necessity of a horse. Obadiah gravely shook his head. Ruth, who had relaxed in her frigid manners toward Oscar, opposed his departure altogether ; but at a later period of the day, Oscar renewed his application, when alone with Obadiah.

"I have no charger adapted to the fierce work," he replied, "and if I had, should I consign him to the brutal habits of the battle-field ? Let us speak no more on this subject, brother Oscar. We concur with thee, but we want to forget thy calling."

"I will trouble you no more, my hospitable and generous friend," said Oscar, with emotion ; "but my country cries aloud for help in this great struggle, and I can not forget that I have still one arm strong enough for service ; therefore, to-morrow morning I *must* quit your kind care for sterner duties."

"Art thou resolved, thou stubborn son of Mars ?" asked Obadiah.

"I am," replied Oscar, "resolved to do my whole duty to my dear country."

"And thou wilt indulge thy waywardness on foot ?" suggested the shrewd Quaker.

"That must be my mode of travel, until fortune favors me with a steed," replied Oscar.

"There is a trooper-horse in my stable," said the Quaker, after musing some minutes ; "it may be thine for aught I know or care. He has been well fed since he tarried here ; but he is subject to the claimant. Go thou there and view him."

Oscar proceeded to the stable, and found a fine steed, well

fitted for the field, and returned to Obadiah greatly rejoiced.

"He is a handsome and powerful horse," said he, "but—"

"Every rider flatters his own beast," replied Obadiah. "I will hear none of thy beast. Thou claimest him, I see, and therefore thou shalt have him. Let us speak no more of this war horse."

With the following morning came the hour of parting. Oscar did not separate from Obadiah without emotion, and when he took the hand of Ruth, and pronounced that thrilling word "farewell," a tear was visible in the spinster's eye. She stood where he had left her until he was no longer visible in the distance, then a deep sigh escaped her. It was echoed by Obadiah from an adjoining window. She started in alarm, and encountered the penetrating gaze of her brother.

"Sister Ruth," he calmly said, "I fear that we have permitted the pleasantness of that warrior youth to sink too deeply into our hearts."

Ruth felt the keenness of the reproach, and, without a remark, seemed to retire to other duties, but really retreated to the privacy of her thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMBASSY.

PHILADELPHIA was terribly disturbed. The intelligence that the battle had been lost struck upon the ears of its people like a knell of condemnation. Children clustered around their mothers, wives clinging to their husbands, and men looked around for something more powerful than themselves on which they might rely for succor. The streets were crowded with affrighted talkers. A multitude of reports followed the news of the calamity, each more fearful than its precursor. Numbers ascended to the house-tops and high places, to see if the conquering army were approaching, and,

magnifying each cloud of dust into the enemy, howled out their terrors to those in the streets below. Nothing was too monstrous for belief. The city was in despair, and it seemed prepared for no other food but such as contributed to its anguish. Thus passed a day and a night. Then the disease began to lessen in intensity. The appalling rumors, like poisons administered in too ample doses, began to be distasteful to the stomach, and reaction was the consequence. The city began to reason. In this it displayed no more wisdom than in its despair. It assembled in discreet groups instead of noisy crowds. Abandoning the air of the suppliant, it assumed the language of the censor. The people blamed the army for being defeated, which they had, a few weeks earlier, consecrated with their cheers and blessings, as it passed through their city. They condemned the noble Washington for not conquering the British, with one-half their numbers, and that half in mere military rags, defective in arms and discipline, and rendered inefficient by want of many things. Then they blamed the apathy of Congress, whose members were packing up their papers and their personal chattels, and escaping to some place of greater safety. It did not occur to these uncharitable critics that there was yet time to repair the disaster, and save their city, if but a few thousands of their growling numbers would themselves, with vigor and resolution, march to the scene of action, and there participate in dangers which they were then incompetent to estimate.

In the meanwhile, Washington redoubled his efforts to defend the dwellings of these resentful people. He had reassembled his broken army, and marshaled it between Philadelphia and the British, so that General Howe, who had calmly and smilingly contemplated an unobstructed march from the banks of Brandywine to the Halls of Congress, now saw with chagrin that he had again to remove the unflinching patriot from his path. Thus situated, he dispatched a courier to his brother, the Admiral, in the Chesapeake, to request that he would await the result of another conflict before he quitted the bay. He wished not to be left without resource in case of a reverse, for Washington was still intent upon the defense of that city which he thought that he had won at the last battle.

During all this struggle Wrecker was not idle. He had not quitted the house of Obadiah Prim in company with Spider, but alone. He knew by intuition that the Commander-in-Chief, though discomfited, was not conquered. Therefore, as soon as darkness favored his purpose, the earnest-souled man mounted, and rode from village to village to rally the refugees of the beaten army, and to urge fresh volunteers to join the forces at Chester. By this means many brave and useful soldiers were secured, and when Oscar reached the camp, he found no reason to blush for the respect he cherished for the person of his singular monitor. Unknown, invisible ever to their mighty chief, the name of Wrecker was esteemed as an important auxiliary to their army, for it was said by those whom he enlisted, that his very breath inspired men with ardor to contest for the liberties of their country.

Wrecker had instructed Spider to proceed to Chester, and there in privacy await his arrival. The activity and pressure of his thoughts did not expel from memory the interview with Oscar. A hundred times he had determined that the letter should be returned to the wounded trooper; but other feelings had as often reversed his resolution.

"Why should that young damsel," he said in reference to Helena, "nurtured in happiness and ease, invite cares and sorrows in the shape of a soldier's love. Am I to behold that fragile figure bent, the roses from those cheeks decay, the ruby banished from those lips, and those eyes dim and tearful by distresses which another may force from her faithful heart? It shall not be! The letter shall be returned, with intimation that he is to make no further advance in his suit to Helena Cavendish; for, should he do it, he may learn too late what it is to incur my wrath. Yet, let me pause before I fully instruct poor, faithful Spider in this matter. The boy was candid with me, and acknowledged that despite the wily aunt the niece loved him. Helena is without guile, and to her word she will be as true as an apostle to his faith. Therefore may it not be that I am even now too late? Has not a wound been inflicted of which, in my attempt to cure, I may increase the suffering? The letter shall be delivered. I shall not be so perfidious as to withhold it, at the risk of **pain to her.** But Spider must see her, note well her

acceptance of this note, and I will not forget to watch this trooper closely. He is a bold youth, and discharged his duty on the field like a dauntless soldier. Let him thus prove himself worthy of the prize he seeks, and when liberty is won, then he may ask a recompense more personal than that freedom which is gained for the public weal."

Two days later, Spider was in the great city of his nativity. The inhabitants were deeply engaged. The Tories resolved to remain—their antagonists to depart. The latter had not sufficient confidence in an army which they would not assist, and were migrating in large floods, with their furniture and goods, as fast as the jaded horses could be sufficiently rested to renew their toil. The city, however, was joyless. The Whigs were angry and excited—the Tories doubtful and dispirited. Both had armies at the gates; but although one army had been defeated, it had risen to efficiency again, and was commanded by a chieftain who could not be easily conquered. Thus the ungainly figure of Spider escaped derision. His directions had been too minute to allow him to be doubtful of the house. It was large, handsome, and detached, and was shaded by noble trees. For a time he gazed upon the structure, then knocked upon the door. A servant responded, and Spider asked for Miss Cavendish. He was invited in the hall, and soon the servant returned, and informed him that "the lady was engaged."

"Then I'll wait 'till she ain't," observed Spider.

"But that may be all day," suggested the servant.

"Then I'll wait all day," replied the imperturbable Spider.

"The lady o' the house, Mrs. Morley, 'll see you," said the servant.

"No she don't!" replied the messenger. "I'll see Miss Cavendish, and here I'll stay all day and night to await her pleasure."

The servant marveled at this conduct. He could scarcely decide which was the most repulsive—the figure or its manner. Both were new to Philadelphia; and, being at a loss how to act, he returned to his mistress for instructions.

While the sturdy messenger maintained his position in the hall, a young and beautiful girl dashed aside the glass doors that opened to the garden, and entered the hall not far

distant from where Spider stood. She was first alarmed at the oddity of his figure; but this was soon dissipated by the grotesque courtesy of Spider, who bowed so low that his ample, pendulous arms rested his hands upon the floor, suggesting the idea of his standing on four feet. The little beauty laughed heartily at this phenomenon, and then asked in a pleasant, merry voice:

"Oh, you funny man, where did you come from?"

"I comded from the Brandywine and from the war, little lady," said Spider, "where I've seen sights that 'tain't pleasant to think on."

"From the Brandywine," said the girl, approaching Spider and looking earnestly into his eye! "Do you know Captain Pembroke, of Harry Lee's Light-horse?"

"Oh yes, I knows him well," replied Spider, coaxing the soft hand which the unaffected child had placed in his.

"Is he dead? Has he been slain by those cruel English?" asked the child, with breathless solicitude, as if her life were on the answer.

"He's alive, dear little lady," replied Spider, delighted with this child charmer.

"Alive!" exclaimed the beauty, in a voice of joy; "thank you for that news," and she pressed his rough hand again and again to her soft cheek; "but stay here," she added, "just where you are, till I return. I am going for my cousin Helena." Then bounding from the hall into the garden, she plunged among the shrubs and rose-trees, crying: "Helena, where are you? Here is a man just from the battle! Captain Pembroke is not killed."

Soon the child returned, holding playfully in her grasp her blushing cousin. They entered the hall. Again Spider bowed till his hands rested on the floor, while the laughing child exclaimed:

"This is my cousin Helena. Tell her of Captain Pembroke.

Poor Spider was almost as incapable of speech as the fair Helena. He had never beheld so much grace and beauty as in these cousins, and his other senses were lost in that of admiration and astonishment. But Helena, perceiving his silence, and attributing it to confusion at their presence, said, with suppressed feeling:

"My cousin Flora tells me that you are from the Brandy wine, and report Captain Pembroke safe. We are rejoiced to learn such news, for he is a friend of ours, and we had heard that he was missing from his regiment."

"That's true, lady," replied the admonished Spider, arousing from his pleasing reverie, "he vas left on the field, wounded—"

"Wounded!" exclaimed Helena, in alarm, advancing closer to the speaker, her frame trembling with apprehension. "What other terrible tidings have you in reserve? Speak, I implore, that I may hear the worst."

"The worst is told lady," replied Spider; "but, if you be Miss Cavendish, there's a leetle more behind."

"I am Miss Cavendish," said Helena.

"Then, I guess that 'ere letter 'll tell all about the wound," said Spider, as he handed to the now hesitating maiden the letter committed to his care.

"Is that From Captain Pembroke?" inquired the innocent Flora.

"Yes," responded Spider.

"Read it, quickly, my dear cousin," cried Flora. "Oh, how kind and thoughtful to write so soon. Now we shall know all about him."

Helena received the letter with a disposition to retire; but this was resisted by the laughing Flora, who thought that all present were equally interested in the writer. Therefore the letter was opened and read. There was a tremulous motion of the pallid lip, and a tear fell from the eye of the young woman as she perused it—emotions too sacred for a witness; but which would not be controlled. Flora watched her cousin intently, and waited patiently to hear what the letter contained, when Helena, in an agitated voice, said:

"Captain Pembroke's arm was broken in the battle. He remained insensible upon the field, but was succored by two worthy men, who conveyed him to a hospitable shelter. He says he is almost recovered."

"How dreadful to break his arm!" cried Flora.

"It is indeed," observed Helena, with a shudder.

"You wouldn't ha' thought so if you'd bin upon *that* field," interferred Spider. "That *was* dreadful. Why it was dyed

with blood, and paved wi' dead men! Arms and legs, and guns and swords, all without owners, covered the ground. Yes, that was dreadful, and if you'd seen that you wouldn't ha' thought much on a broken arm, young ladies."

"We feel your admonition," replied Helena, with great sweetness and more composure, as if she had benefited by the comparative reasoning of her messenger. "We ought to be thankful that our friend escaped with so little injury from such a field of carnage."

At this juncture a lady entered the hall from a side passage. She paused in astonishment as she beheld Helena. It was Mrs. Morley.

"I was not aware that you were here, my love," said the aunt. "I heard that there was a stranger in the hall, and came to inquire his business, which he refused to communicate to the servant who admitted him."

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed Flora, "Helena has a letter from Captain Pembroke. He is not killed; he has only broken his arm."

Thus Flora, in her artless candor, in the desire that her mother should share the joy felt in Oscar's preservation, had disclosed her cousin's secret. Helena was distressed with confusion and maiden shame. The aunt looked any thing but amiable, though she uttered no word of anger. But she never used hard language toward her niece. Indeed, it was often a matter of astonishment to Helena that so proud and arrogant a woman should ever treat her—a poor dependent—with the most scrupulous attention and generosity, placing no limitation to her expenses nor denying her any luxury. This profuse liberality was never referred to with a taunt—a forbearance she did not practice toward some others of her pensioners, to whom she assumed a haughtiness that deprived her charities of all their luster. This seeming preference and magnanimity in her aunt, won Helena's heart, and she now bitterly reproached herself with having concealed from her the love she entertained for Oscar. It was the first time in her life that she had ever shunned the eye of her noble relative. After some few moments had transpired in silence, Mrs. Morley, referring to Flora's words, said:

"Is this true, Helena?"

"Yes, my dear aunt," replied Helena. "I have received a letter from Captain Pembroke by this messenger, stating that he has escaped the hands of the enemy with but a broken arm, which is fast recovering. He was fearful that without this communication we should have given credence to exaggerated statements, and that our feelings might be needlessly pained."

"It is kind and considerate of the gallant Captain," replied Mrs. Morley, ironically, "but I think I at least could have endured the suspense that might have occurred between the exaggerated and the true statement; but, as it is, we must not show ourselves insensible to his kindness, and return our congratulations."

Mrs. Morley then retired. The lady was defeated. She had come with the intention of intercepting whatever letter or message might have been intended for Helena; but accident had given to Helena the advantage. Spider was amazed. He had never seen so much beauty in humanity as was displayed in those three faces—mother, niece, and daughter; and he gazed from face to face without thinking of aught but the charms before him. Flora, however, though a stranger to the troubles of the heart, perceiving that something disturbed the tranquillity of her cousin, whispered in her ear that, if she retired to her room she would entertain the messenger. Helena withdrew, and Flora, without further delay, invited Spider to follow her to the garden, where he could find no flower more beautiful than that which undertook to be his guide.

Helena, in her own apartment, withdrew that great treasure from her bosom—Oscar's letter. She wondered, as she read on, who that officious individual could be who so cruelly restrained the language of Oscar's heart. He had not been visitor to her aunt, at least not under the name he now assumed, and why he should affect an authority in reference to herself amounting to any thing like guardianship, she could not imagine. Then her aunt's sarcastic speech so like her behavior to other people, but so unlike that practiced toward herself, gave her much uneasiness. She was her only friend, who had made her life a constant day of happiness. She felt that she ought to have spoken to this dear relative before she

had said one kind word of hope to her. but her aunt's hostility to him was manifested so openly that she feared to reveal her preference; and now that it was thus partially disclosed, she knew how reluctantly her aunt would receive her tardy confidence. With these impressions the young girl approached her writing table, where she penned the following epistle to Oscar, that the messenger who brought the letter might return with the reply :

" OSCAR:—Never was truth more welcome than that in your letter. It was preceded by a hundred tragic falsehoods, and my great consolation was that they were too wild for credence. I feared more than I believed them. The breaking of a limb is shocking, but your quaint messenger has pictured so many greater horrors on that sad field that I am contented to think you fortunate. Who is that grim censor that presumes to prescribe to you the measure of your diction? Certainly not the friend of my aunt nor the guardian of me. Such trustees, forsooth, are generally created more for the care of property than persons, and as I am penniless—even indebted for my daily bread to my benevolent aunt—I never was assigned to such protection. But, I pardon him this assumption, for he succored you when you were wounded and exhausted, and sheltered you beneath the roof of those worthy friends. Be careful with your arm. Let some one lead your troop until you are more fitted for the service, and cherish this as the advice of Your devoted

HELENA."

The letter sealed and addressed, Helena sought the messenger in the garden. There she found him, still accompanied by Flora, looking more at her than at the flowers to which she was ever calling his attention, and seemingly storing away every word she uttered that he might have subject of thought his long journey to the camp.

" Ah, Flora, my love," said Helena, smiling, " I can not chide one whom I love so well. I should be tempted to do so for having detained Spider here, instead of furnishing him with refreshment."

" I like this better, lady," interposed Spider.

" Yes, cousin," said Flora, " he has been so much entertained; but luncheon is ready now."

They all passed in together. Luncheon was spread in a small room adjoining the garden, and as Mrs. Morley had driven out, Florence requested that Spider might take luncheon with them. Helena assented, for she perceived that he was anxious to remain. Astonishment greatly reduced his appetite, for he seemed to feast more upon the beauty of the ladies than upon the viands. When the repast was eaten Helena asked him if he would remain the night, and leave early in the morning. But, he became alarmed and agitated, and seemed for the first time to awaken to a sense of his idleness, and said that he must leave at once.

"Why are you in such haste?" asked Flora.

"Wrecker might expect me," replied Spider.

"Who is this Wrecker," inquired Helena, "and will he be angry with you?"

"Oh, Wrecker's a very good man—always good," said Spider, with great energy. "No, he won't be angry; but I always like to please 'em."

Helena, gratified with the reply, made no further attempt to detain him. It was a lesson in obedience rarely taught and still less frequently practiced; but, it was one of the lofty principles in the conduct of the poor, untaught boy. He reluctantly but determinedly took his leave. In doing this he retained the hands which the ladies proffered so long in his grasp, that a blush overspread Helena's face. Flora, however, was anxious to confer another kindness upon Spider. She opened a portfolio, took a drawing, and put it into his hand.

"There," she said, "that is my own painting. It is called a forget-me-not, the same that I showed you in the garden. I give it to you. It is the emblem of fidelity, and means that I will ever be your faithful friend."

Poor Spider was delighted. He gazed intently upon the flowers, repeated the words "forget-me-not," and twice asked Flora to pronounce "fidelity," and with this great treasure nestling his heart, and still rehearsing that lesson which comprised the name of the flower and its emblematic uses, he strode from Philadelphia to the camp, as light-hearted and as tireless as if he had only rambled to an adjoining street.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTS ON A BATTLE-FIELD.

GENERAL WASHINGTON still showed a gallant disposition to succor Philadelphia; and thus, four days after the encounter on the banks of the Brandywine, the opposing bayonets of the belligerents again bristled in sight of each other. Congress, with more prudent foresight than it had exercised in the equipment of the army, had quitted the halls whence was issued the Declaration of Independence, and retired to Lancaster. General Wayne was instructed to take secret possession of a wood, not very distant from the British army, in the darkness of night, and there await further orders. He remained in that spot several days, chafing like an imprisoned lion, within sound of the British drum, and at times within hearing of the enemy's voices. Several times he implored Washington to commence an attack, that he might debouch upon the enemy's flank, assuring the General that they knew not of his proximity. Wayne was in error. The British knew him to be there, and though they openly affected ignorance, they watched him in a stealthy manner. At length the enemy resolved to surprise him in a night attack. In effecting this they first marched their forces to a smaller wood, defended by a few hundred men. The Colonel in command of the patriots, more brave than prudent, drew his men in front of his watch-fires, where, standing in bold relief before the shining flames, they became mere targets for their foes, and fell before their withering fire. Wayne, inspired by the roar of musketry, hastened to the rescue, but he reached the scene of the disaster only in time to deplore the indiscretion. He was compelled to fall back before the enemy. This he effected without other loss than that of his position, for just as the British were about to advance, a cheer was heard from an army of brave voices, and down from a gentle declivity on the left galloped the famed Light-horse. The next instant they charged the deep columns of the British, which shook as if disordered by an earthquake.

Oscar had returned to his regiment in time to share in this glorious charge. His arm depended from his neck in a sling, and, taking his bridle in his right hand, holding his saber between his teeth, he dashed forward with his brave companions, inspiring them with additional courage at his resolute example. Oscar, however, soon abandoned the bridle for the sword, and the horse, unguided by its rider, became separated from his men. At this instant the enemy receiving heavy reinforcements, word was given to retire. In his efforts to regain his troop his horse stumbled and he fell from the saddle. The agony to his unhealed arm in the concussion with the earth was so acute that he closed his eyes in suffering, and when the next instant he opened them, a soldier, maddened with rage and blackened with powder, was about to plunge his sword into his heart. The weapon was suspended over his breast, when a horseman dashed furiously up, and, pushing aside the assailant, he cried :

"What I can a Sergeant of the 40th find no better quarry than a prostrate rival?" Then, turning to Oscar, he exclaimed : "Up, boy, and into the saddle, if you would avoid death."

The Sergeant advanced against the officious stranger.

"Speak," cried the Sergeant, "are ye frind or inimy? 'Tis hard to tell one from 'tother by this light, therefore if you're true, sing out 'Huzza for King George!' and I shall know your bearings."

"You prescribe a dose that every American will reject," replied the horseman, derisively. "We have but one George, and that is *George Washington*, and I have no doubt but that he will prove the better George of the two. Ha! does that sentiment offend you that you threaten me with your sword? I, a simple civilian, armed with no more formidable weapon than a native hickory?"

Then, as the indignant Sergeant drew near, the horseman with a dextrous blow, struck him upon the wrist. The sturdy hand unclasped, the weapon fell to the ground, and the royal soldier stood aghast.

"Farewell, Sergeant Holland," said the horseman, "I will not crown my victory with death. We have met before, and I was not vengeful. Do you remember those signal flags with which you amused a leisure hour on Gray's Hill?"

At this he turned his horse's head, and left the defeated Sergeant in speechless wonder. Oscar had with difficulty remounted; but he scorned to fly and leave his liberator in the midst of enemies. By the pale starlight and the deep rich voice, he had recognized the horseman. He then knew that that threadbare, russet dress was irreconcilable with the man—that Wrecker was not what he outwardly appeared.

"Why are you not on your road to safety?" said Wrecker, as he perceived Oscar. "Have you not been near enough to death that you thus tempt him? Let us move on immediately,—down yonder to the hollow, for, without some favoring shadow we shall not be permitted to ride far and escape a challenge."

"I would not escape alone," replied Oscar, "and abandon you to the peril from which you had delivered me. I would rather have been slain by that red-coat than have been guilty of cowardice and ingratitude."

"A sentiment well worthy of a soldier," observed Wrecker, "but rather grandiloquent on the part of one that has but one serviceable arm, and who was wholly without a weapon."

"That did not occur to me before," said Oscar, with evident feelings of mortification, "but, viewing the helpless condition to which I am reduced, it must appear to you that I remained rather for you to protect me than to assist you in case of need."

"No, no," said Wrecker, more kindly, "I will acquit you of those feelings. But, look yonder; there is something that demands our more immediate attention. See you that group of men? They are returning in boastful hilarity from an encounter with our compatriots, and, should they distinguish us from these stately trees, and find that we are but two in number, they will doubtless throw down the gauntlet. Here, take this pistol, it is the only one I have. I will confide in my trusty hickory. I would advise you to fly, but, after what has been said, you are too much on your mettle. One thing I would enforce: reserve your fire till the moment of imminent danger."

There was no time to reply. They were discovered.

"Who goes there?" exclaimed one of the four who composed the party.

"Travelers," responded Wrecker.

"Then your journey is ended—you are our prisoners," said the same voice, while two of them advanced, and two remained in the rear.

There was an indignant curl of Wrecker's lip as he gave his powerful horse the rein. He dashed forward, hurling one of the troopers to the earth, and before Oscar had time to advance to his assistance, he wheeled, and, striking the other soldier across the bridle-arm, the reins fell from his grasp while his frightened animal ran wildly across the field. At this crisis the other soldiers reached the spot. They were both officers, and their quick eyes detected the position of affairs, and they prepared to repair the loss. One of them drew a pistol from his holster, and leveled it at Wrecker's head. This was the moment for Oscar's interference. The greatest precision and coolness were required; in those soldierly qualities he was not deficient. It was a fearful moment of suspense. But pistols were leveled at the same time—the one at Wrecker, the other at his assailant. Death seemed depending on which supple finger might reach the trigger first. There were two flashes of fire, and two reports—one an instant before the other—and an awful silence followed. The smoke and the darkness combined to mask the effect; but no one fell. The stillness was broken by the British officer, exclaiming to the one who fired at Wrecker:

"Gordon, are you hit?"

"Ay, slightly," was the reply; "but I care not for the wound, had it not disturbed my aim at that plebeian's head."

Oscar, rejoiced that his fire had been effective, received additional assurance when, the next instant, Wrecker whispered in his ear:

"Let us withdraw while we are victors, for we are too near the enemy's camp for safety." Then turning toward the discomfited officers, he added: "Gentlemen, farewell. We will pursue our journey. Major Gordon, whatever honor the 40th may this day have won in line, they have been peculiarly unfortunate in single combat. You are the second officer of that famous regiment that we have defeated on the field."

An English growl, vindictive and prolonged, was all that followed, for the only pistol of the party had been fired.

As Wrecker and Oscar rode on, side by side, skirting the woods, to keep within the darkness of its trees, the latter asked

"Was that really Major Gordon, of the 40th?"

"Yes," replied Wrecker, "he is one of the most supercilious officers in the British army. He will soon institute inquiries as to the other officer whom we disarmed, little suspecting that it is not a greater personage than Sergeant Holland. But, that was an admirable shot of yours. You were ready at the critical period, and your coolness and discrimination could not have been excelled. I hope to see you a distinguished soldier."

Oscar was flattered by this compliment from so rare a source. To be sure he had saved the speaker's life; but then he had been delivered by Wrecker a few minutes earlier from as great a danger. Oscar still felt himself the debtor, and, in reference to this, he said:

"But, you might easily have withdrawn if you had been disposed to leave me to my fate, which must have been death or capture. The speed of your horse, which you now with difficulty restrain, would easily have preserved you from the enemy; but your generosity and magnanimity forbade such a step, and you remained for my defense."

"Ah, he is a noble animal," replied Wrecker, patting his horse, and seemingly far more pleased at the approval of his horse than of himself; "he is swift as the swallow and tireless as the sun. But, as things were, my 'generosity' was the cause, through you, of my own preservation, and had I not anticipated something of the kind, I might have put my gallant courser to his mettle. Your horse is a good stout charger, and has the points of endurance in him; but a little slow in pace. We are, however, beyond danger, and, at the end of this wood, our roads diverge."

Oscar regretted that. His path was to rejoin his troop, and he knew it would be futile to attempt to influence that of his companion. Still, there was a subject that occupied his heart in every hour of danger; he wished to mention it to this mysterious stranger, and, as they rode in silence toward the spot appointed for the separation, he revolved in his mind how that could be introduced. He had reached no decision when they drew in their horses.

"Here we part," said Wrecker.

"When shall we meet again?" asked Oscar.

"That must depend on accident," replied Wrecker, "for my movements are uncertain."

"Before we separate, may I ask if Spider has returned from the delivery of my letter?" ventured Oscar, with some misgivings of the manner in which the question would be received.

"I know not," briefly responded Wrecker.

"Because," continued Oscar, "it is possible that there may be some few lines in reply, and I should like to have them quickly."

"There was no such article in the compact," said Wrecker, with evident irritation. "I permitted you to inform your friends that you were not materially injured in the fight, for I thought it possible that such reports might reach them as would cause much grief; but I will not allow that boy to be a channel for clandestine correspondence. The only seeming friend and protector of the young lady to whom you addressed that letter is her aunt. To her you are most unacceptable—she dislikes you. Yet, she loves Miss Cavendish, her niece. She shares her style of living, which is one of expense and elegance. Every comfort and luxury is within her reach, and nothing is denied that can contribute to her happiness. Would you entice from such a home that spotless girl, and offer her in return the bitter pittance of a penniless soldier? Weigh this matter well, young man, and, if you be dispassionate, you will perceive that the ruling motive of your action is selfishness; this unworthy feeling I would advise you to root out of your mind."

Wrecker said no more. He gave his horse the rein, and darted over the black common at a pace that defied pursuit. Oscar was greatly mortified. He asked himself one minute why he permitted the admonition of such a man, and the next how could he resist. There was a supremacy about this stranger that he could not defy; and, distasteful and provoking as was his philippic, there was so much potency in the argument, that he almost feared to submit it to his conscience. He wondered yet more who this man could be that assumed so much in reference to Helena, and seemed so well acquainted

with her affairs. With his mind thus troubled, he rode slowly toward the quarters of his troop, who, upon his arrival, greeted him with great joy. The remainder of the night was devoted to slumber, and so accustomed was Oscar to danger that, notwithstanding the thrilling events of the last few hours, when his life had been twice in jeopardy, he sunk upon his humble pallet, and was soon in profound repose. His first thoughts, as he awoke, were of Helena, and the first object that met his gaze was the figure of Spider.

"Ha, Spider, you here?" cried Oscar. "You have something for me. Why did you not arouse me, and not sit there patiently by my side until I should unclose my eyes? for, if I mistake not your errand here, there is more refreshment in your intelligence than in my slumber."

Spider did not reply in words. He smiled, drew from his pocket a small billet, and, presenting it to Oscar, stood by watching the avidity with which the young soldier devoured every syllable it contained. At length it was finished, and the officer felt rich indeed—rich in the assurance of his beloved one's favor. He would have rewarded Spider from his slender purse, but that incorruptible servant of his patron declined the smallest recompense. Oscar again and again re-read his letter.

"Who *can* this Wrecker be?" he mused, as he placed the invaluable document near his heart. "He is unknown to Helena, although he asserted that she is well known to him. He moves with the army, although not a man in the service has a personal knowledge of him. He defies danger like a gallant soldier, and has the tact and decision of a military commander, with but the pretensions of a civilian, and he rides the borse of a prince, in the garb of a beggar. A paradox in all things. His only confidant is Spider, and though that bony imp is devoted to his service, and listens to his every word as if it flowed from some mighty potentate, he addresses him but as 'Wrecker,' and never ladens his no means flippant tongue with the courtesy of 'sir.' I will ascertain from Spider where he is to meet this dark preceptor."

But the messenger was gone! No one had seen him quit the tent. The sentinels averred that he had not left the camp

still he could not be found within it. This was another subject of astonishment to Oscar. Wrecker and Spider seemed parallels in mystery. Oscar, however, was indebted to them both, within the last few hours, for favors too great to be forgotten.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIDER'S CAPTIVITY.

ALTHOUGH Spider seemed to the enchanted Oscar to have vanished very suddenly from his tent, he really did not do so. Oscar did not estimate the time that he had consumed in reading and re-reading the epistle he had received. He rushed after Spider as if he had but that instant quitted his presence, while full three hours had elapsed between that messenger's disappearance and his inquiries, during which there had been a change of sentinels, and nothing was known by them of what had occurred upon a previous guard.

Spider delighted in adventure, and having fulfilled his mission to Oscar, felt a desire to take a peep into the English camp. This he approached as near as possible by day, and when night afforded more advantage in concealment, he ventured still closer, until, by great dexterity, he stole within its lines. His eye soon was attracted by the light of fire, and, upon advancing, perceived that it was surrounded by several soldiers and a woman—the veritable monster whom he had withheld from murder on the field of Brandywine.

"Now, pray, Bet Dirk," said one of the soldiers, peevishly: "do be handy and get that stew ready; we're tired wi' a hard day's duty, and don't know how soon we may be mustered into line again. War's a hard master," continued the man, putting a plaster on his arm, "and allows us no time to patch our wounded bodies 'twixt fight and fight, much less to mend our tattered clothes."

"Tattered clothes, indeed," ejaculated the frowning Betsy; "the cloth o' the country comes tattered from the looms—rags here is universal. I remember wars when you would get a

few decent articles o' clothing, or what not, arter a battle; but here, among these liberty men, there's nothin' but rag and empty pockets. One would think that we're warrin' wi' the beggars o' the nation, instead o' the gentry o' the republic. I ha' spoke to the prisoners o' the matter, and tried to shame 'em by tellin' 'em how disgraceful 'tis to see a field so scattered wi' dead poverty; they seem to fale it, and say 'tis all the fault o' Congress."

"Ha, Betty," remarked another, who was likewise waiting for his supper, "'tis poor gleanin' here arter the r'aver death."

"What does ye mane, Sargeant Stork?" exclaimed the lady, in great wrath. "Ye does not mane to say as how I'm a gl'ancer o' *that* sort? Ef I thought that, Sargeant as you is, I'd fling this stew about yer head, and you and yer guard might go widout yer supper, or grab for't like pigs from the ground."

"Smoothly, Betty, smoothly," said a third; "the Sergeant's on'y in a ill mood till the supper's served."

This speaker seemed to be regarded more patiently by the cook, and Betty proceeded with her work until the smoking viands were served to the hungry men. Betty did not disdain to join in the feast, and all for a time were silent. At length the one who had first spoken remarked:

"'Tis said that a trap is laid to-night to ketch them Light-hoss devils."

"Ay," said another, "them's jist the men we want to ketch. They keep 'us under arms both night and day. A man needs no blanket with these fellers in his front."

"We're alas a hearin' o' these traps," interposed a third, "but never o' the ketchin' o' the game. 'Tis all camp bosh!"

"'Tis true," repeated the first speaker; "I l'arned it from Johnny Pry, the cowboy, who the rebels believe to be skinner, so that he can turn 'em round his fingers. The Light-hoss, or Captain Pembroke's troop, at least, is to be this night decoyed into an ambush, and there killed or taken."

"Johnny had as well hang hisself as enter on this business," said the Corporal. "I tell ye what, Sargeant, 'tis a bad business when one man leads another, be he friend or foe, into an ambuscade."

"So 'tis, Corporal, so 'tis," added the Sergeant, "and I'd rayther be Sergeant Stork than Johnny Pry, though he may succeed in his hazardous game, and get his reward of so much a head for dead men. Not but I'd like to see them Light-hoss destroyed, for that young Pembroke's troop are very devils; but, give 'em fair play in field and foray—let's have no ambuscades—they ain't honorable in civilized war, now."

"'Tis all stuff!" exclaimed the dulcinea of the party, who had slyly taken one or two refreshers from a bottle in her pocket; "let Johnny Pry follow his callin', while you follow yourn, for you both dale in death, and what matter how 'tis dealt out. I tell ye that them Light-hoss ought to be extarninated, and if Sargeant Stork's sixteen won't do't, why, Johnny Pry must."

"Ay," jocundarily remarked the Sergeant, "Betty's a thinkin' on the battle o' Brandywine, when, in takin' some liberty wi' a wounded Light-hoss prisoner, she got the worst o' the fray. But, I never could make out what business Betty had alone on the field at midnight."

The wrath of Betty was ungovernable at this sly reflection upon her nocturnal weakness, and, had not the boiling stew been devoured, the luckless Sergeant would have had it on his poll; but, as it was, she hurled the burning firebrands at his head, and the gallant soldier, who had never feared to charge the enemy to the cannon's mouth, decamped before these missiles of a single foe. His companions followed, leaving the foaming tigress to herself.

Not a word of this conversation had escaped the ear of Spider, who had listened to its disclosures in great alarm. He removed from his hiding-place on the dispersion of the party, and his first device was immediately to seek Wrecker as the most likely step to avert the impending danger. I thus proceeded with more celerity than caution, and was not aware of how he was defeating his main object until hearing the harsh challenge:

"Who goes there?"

These words struck terror into the anxious heart, since they held him prisoner in the camp, when hundreds of lives might depend on his escape. He could only endeavor to

frame such an excuse as he thought might be admissible in a boy, and replied :

" 'Tis me, a poor boy ; I ha' lost my way."

" Then you're my prisoner," said the sentinel.

" What !" exclaimed Spider, in affected wonder, " is't a crime to lose one's way ?"

" 'Tis a crime in a military camp not to know the coun'ry sign," sharply replied the soldier.

" 'Tis not learned in sojerin," said the boy.

He was committed at once to the charge of a passing file of men, who had been relieved from guard, and conducted to the guard-house. Here he was ushered into the presence of an officer, to whom the particulars of the case were related.

" How came you there ?" asked the officer, alluding to the place where the boy was taken."

" I lost my way i' the dark," replied Spider.

" But how came you in the camp ?" said the officer.

" I s'pose I strayed in," said Spider, in apparent stupidity. " I didn't know that 'twas a camp. I'm on'y a horse-boy, and know nothin' about camp."

" Has the prisoner been searched ?" asked the officer of those in attendance.

" Yes, sir," replied a Sergeant, " but nothin' have bin found upon him but this," and the Sergeant handed the officer the "forget-me-not" given to him by Flora.

" Only this !" exclaimed the sapient officer, as he minutely examined the little flower. " Why, it may mean many things. Have I not told you a hundred times that a volume is concealed within these 'nothings'? A pair of gold spurs was once sent from Scotland to England, on the discovery of a plot, from one nobleman to another, to warn him of his danger at a period when it might have been fatal to write, or employ a verbal messenger, and the one in peril being quick of wit, and guilty too—neither of which I ascribe to you—construed the ingenious device correctly ; he quickly buckled on his spurs, mounted his fleetest horse, and did not draw the rein until he had crossed the Tweed—and thus saved his head. This flower, like the spurs, has a language of its own. It is called 'forget-me-not,' and may be sent into this camp

to remind some false friend of a former promise, and that promise may be treason. Boy, where got you this symbol?"

"From a young gal—a lady—in Phil'delphy," replied Spider.

"'Tis false," said the officer, with great vehemence. "Sergeant, let the prisoner be safely confined. I'll instantly report the case, with my own suspicions in the matter, and if he be not more communicative in the morning, youth as he is, we will hang him as a spy."

Spider was thrust into a dark room, and left to his own reflections; but, this confinement only redoubled his wild eagerness to be free. He ran round his lightless prison to ascertain its size, he leaped to the ceiling to gain a knowledge of its height, and then, finding that there was no outlet but the door by which he entered, he cast himself upon the floor, and there sought for some implement that might aid him in his efforts to escape. He was in ecstasies when he found about twelve inches of an iron band from a commissary box, and then stood for a few minutes in partial triumph, thinking how he could best employ this treasure in working his release. The building was constructed of logs, with a ground floor, and there was little hope of making an impression upon its heavy side with the foot of hoop at his command. With a resource equal to the emergency, he determined to undermine the foundation, and at once commenced his excavation. With this atom of iron hoop, and his hands and feet, he worked with such vehemence that his scanty clothes were soon saturated with the moisture of his heated body. Still resolute and unflinching, he was sunk below his knees in the road to liberty, when the door of the prison opened, and he was detected. He leaped from his puny cave, inspired by feelings of ferocity that never before had entered his youthful heart, and was about to leap upon the intruder when a ray of light from a lantern carried by this man flashed upon his face, and disclosed one whom he had seen before. This stayed his hand.

"Ah, boy," said the visitor, in a kind of whisper, as he gazed upon the hole in the floor, "that's no way to cheat the r—. Ye might get outside; but, there'd be men to receive

you, who'd hang ye on the next tree by way o' settlin' the score ; still, you're not without a friend whilst lives Sergeant Holland o' the 40th line. I'm he, and I'll stand by ye as I promised to do in need. At midnight—in two hours—I'll set ye free ;" and then the Sergeant passed from the cell in haste, closing and locking the door.

The alarm, the entry, and the departure of the Sergeant, had been so rapid that there was no time for Spider to recover from his agitation, and he was again alone before he felt the force o' the Sergeant's visit ; when fully aroused to a sense of what had occurred, he jumped into the hole that he had so dextrously dug, and sitting upon its margin, revolved in his mind whether he ought to confide sufficiently in the English soldier to abandon his labor.

The night passed slowly on, and a single sentinel was parading in front of the door where Spider was confined, when a boisterous song was heard outside, and soon a woman staggered up, exclaiming :

" Ho, guard !"

" What, Betty," said the sentinel, laughing. " What, drunk agin. What is ye doin' wi' that cord ?"

" I'm come to hang the spy," replied the female. " I'm come to see justice is done. I demand the pris'ner."

The guard treated the woman with derision, until she became so exasperated that she seized him, threw him on the floor, bound him hand and foot, and placing a gag in his mouth, turned her attention to the prison-door. This she unlocked, exclaiming :

" Come forth, young iniquity, come forth ! for, by the honor of Betty Dirk, ye shall never see th' light o' another sun."

When Spider appeared, there stood Betty Dirk, and upon the floor writhed the sentinel, too tightly bound and effectually gagged to give any alarm.

Betty, however, seemed not inclined to dally. She seized the young prisoner by the collar, and forcing him outside the door, she there whispered in his ear :

" Be quick, and you're safe. Follow this path, 'tis freest from danger. But, remember, when you're challenged and 'n passing out the lines, the word is ' Brandywine.' "

Though as much astonished at this extraordinary rescue as at the visit of the Sergeant two hours before, Spider hastened forward to make the best use of the few precious hours of the night that still remained. The word "Brandywine" favored his exit from the British camp. Again free, he would have been blithe and happy but for the secret that rested on his mind; but, how could he better indulge the sweets of liberty than in hastening to Captain Pembroke's camp and warning him of his danger? With this design he rushed through the woods at a pace that none of his day could equal but he had not proceeded more than a mile, when his care was converted into joy at the sound of a peculiar whistle, and in another minute he was beside Wrecker.

While these events were in course of action, young Pembroke was in the saddle at the head of his troop, proceeding upon one of those secret expeditions for which he had become so famous. He was guided by a famous scout by the name of Johnny Pry, who, by exhibiting to him the great advantage to be gained, he somewhat reluctantly consented to undertake the adventure. It was contrary to his principles of action to permit his intentions to be known, and to this secrecy he attributed much of his success. Although less sanguine of the successful result of his expedition, for the reason of its being known to another besides himself, Oscar was not less resolute in its prosecution now that it was commenced, and he was pondering with his usual caution to its accomplishment, when a horseman, emerging singly from the woods, rode up beside him.

"You ride late, Captain Pembroke," he said, "too late to effect aught but misfortune."

Oscar recognized the noble horse of Wrecker, and although he would have been pleased with the aid of one whom he knew to be so intrepid and so shrewd, he was annoyed at the nonchalant manner in which this cynic criticised his actions, as well as with the rather insulting liberty which he assumed on the present occasion of conferring defeat upon him before the engagement had ensued. He therefore replied:

"I am not unprepared for whatever may befall me."

"I fear not," rejoined Wrecker, "by the boldness with which you are leading your gallant fellows to destruction."

"By one under fewer obligations than I am to you," said Oscar, warmly, "your observations would be received as a rudeness."

"But not the less true," said Wrecker, with unconcern, and then added: "By-the-by, that scoundrel Johnny Pry is riding in advance, as your guide and counselor in the net."

"That is the name of my guide on this occasion," responded Oscar, with increased irritation; "but I know not upon what grounds you associate him as my counselor. You affect to know more of this expedition than myself."

"Far more, my young friend," said Wrecker, "for knowing well your design, I can foretell the end; that end will be calamitous to you unless turned to your advantage by a timely stratagem."

Oscar was astounded and not unimpressed by these remarks. He believed that Wrecker was true to his country, and that, notwithstanding the severity of his strictures, he was not ill-disposed toward him. He was, therefore, preparing to request him to be more explicit, when Spider came leaping from the woods in breathless haste and made some communication to Wrecker.

"Captain Pembroke," exclaimed Wrecker, turning to that officer, "let me implore you to halt your troop instantly, or you may never recross the American lines."

Oscar was now alarmed. He saw the earnestness and believed in the faith of Wrecker, and without a word of explanation he brought his troop to a stand.

"Now recall your advance, and let them bring back Pry," said Wrecker, and when his order was executed he unfolded to Oscar the whole treacherous scheme, and that Spider had since discovered the place of ambush about a mile ahead. Johnny Pry soon appeared. He could not deny his treason, and he was sent to the rear for further disposition, while Oscar and Wrecker concerted a plan to attack the British in the rear. Led by the trusty Spider, Oscar came upon the British when they feared some perfidy of the spy by the delay, and being astonished at an attack when they expected to overwhelm, and forming no estimate of the assaulting numbers in the darkness, they made but a feeble resistance and then retreated. Oscar gained a complete victory, capturing a number

of men, horses, and accoutrements. Johnny Pry escaped the custody in which he had been placed ; but, he was two days after found hanging to a tree, no doubt the victim of the British. Wrecker fought with great bravery, and when the fray was ended and Oscar sought to thank him for his deliverance, both the master and servant had disappeared. Proud of the achievements of the night, yet owing it all to this mysterious man, Oscar returned to the camp.

The rescue of Spider created, for a few days, great excitement in the British camp, although they did not associate it with the defeat of their ambush. When the proper officer appeared to relieve the sentinel placed over the captured boy he found him bound and almost insensible on the floor, and the prisoner gone. Upon the recovery and examination of the guard, such a statement was made as led to an order for the immediate arrest of Betty Dirk, who, after considerable search, was found dead beside a cask of rum in a sutler's wagon. The sutler swore that he had locked the gates of the store-house, where the body was found, at nine o'clock on the previous night ; that it had not been opened until the guard demanded entrance, and that the gates were found in the same state of safety as when he secured them. The sentinel was as positive that it was Betty Dirk who had bound him and released the boy ; and that she was abroad at a late hour was confirmed by a picket-guard, who had met her after midnight and ordered her to her quarters. The sutler's building was examined, and it was found to have been secured with three locks, and that there was no aperture where it was possible for a person to pass out, and he believed that Betty had concealed herself there *before* it was closed for the night in her love for liquor. These accounts were inflexibly adhered to by all parties, and the inquiry was eventually dismissed. The men, however, had no doubt but that both figures were Betty—but that the Betty who bound the soldier and freed the prisoner was the ghost—the shadow of the substance that slept by the tub of rum. The eye of the Sergeant, however, always twinkled knowingly when the subject was resumed, though his tongue never uttered an opinion on the subject.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WARNING VOICE.

THE British found that the victory at Brandywine had not secured an easy promenade to Philadelphia. Like a horrid thaw assails the beast which he is unable to devour, Washington appeared in his van, settled on his flanks, and attacked him in every quarter, delaying his progress, greatly injuring his huge body, exhausting his patience and his strength. But, the enemy was too powerful, too well disciplined, and too carefully equipped to be permanently disabled by these hostile exercises, and thus it reached Germantown, within a short distance of the envied city. On the 26th of September, one month after its landing on the banks of the Chesapeake, a detachment of the army under Cornwallis marched into Philadelphia.

A glorious day the conquerors had selected for their entrance. The sun shone upon the army of the third George in monarchical brilliancy, and the glittering Delaware and Schuylkill, which had so placidly contributed their waters to the patriot army, now as tranquilly supplied a beverage to the invading foe. The inhabitants of the capital city, reduced almost to Tories by an abundant emigration—were exuberant in their joy, and welcomed the approach of the British with as much delight as if the invaders had been fighting for their deliverance instead of their subjugation.

The procession was headed by a numerous band and flanked by such boys and people of a city as are devoted to all pageantry. Then followed the royal standard, on which was inscribed the lion, *rampant*, whose uplifted paws seemed to threaten with instant combat him who should assail the regal crown. Cornwallis and his staff came next, who, with their handsome full-dress uniforms, bullion epaulets, bullion trimmings to their coats, cocked-hats and ostrich plumes, presented a gay and impressive appearance. Then succeeded detachments of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, with their arms glistening in the sun, their colors floating in the breeze, and their

bands playing exulting marches or martial airs. The horsemen rode with drawn swords, while the steel scabbards clattered by their sides, as the curveting steeds, impatient at the sluggish movement, were difficult to restrain. The footmen marched in formidable array, with fixed bayonets, their polished weapons reflecting the sunbeams in dazzling radiance.

No one would have imagined that these troops were entering a conquered city. The houses were roofed with cheering people; windows, stoops, and balconies were crowded with the fair, whose pleasing smiles, so apt to be won by the luster of the hour, were bestowed most bounteously upon the royal host. Never was a city in more seeming unanimity, and, in some cases, whole congregations, who had met within their churches in great gravity for prayer, now assembled on the steeples, the better to behold the vanity below.

On this eventful morning, Mrs. Morley sat in the breakfast room of her handsome mansion, partaking that early meal with Helena and Flora. There was but one topic of conversation in the city, and that was the approaching entry of the British. On this exciting subject the ladies discoursed.

"The day is fair for the conquerors," said Mrs. Morley, "and Philadelphia will receive them as becomes a loyal people. I hope Sir William Howe will be in the procession, for he is esteemed one of the most courteous gentlemen of the age."

"I can not sympathize with the invaders, my dear aunt," said Helena, "they are upholding the right of unjust and oppressive rule, and many of the most accomplished of English statesmen contend that this attempt is very properly represented with the sword."

"My dear Helena," exclaimed the aunt, in alarm, "I trust that you will never repeat that sentiment. It is enough to attract the frown of every officer of the British army, and to exclude us from all the balls and gayeties with which these jovial and generous strangers may entertain the city."

"They were the sentiments of my dear father," replied Helena; "he loved this country and was jealous of its liberties. I only sustain his feelings, and I wish they could be maintained by a son instead of by a daughter." A rich flush mounted to her cheeks and temples as she spoke.

"Helena," exclaimed Mrs. Morley, in considerable ~~epida~~
tion, "what makes you introduce the name of your poor
father, which is never referred to without causing me great
distress. Who could have spoken to you upon those political
relations of your father?"

The anguish displayed in Mrs. Morley's face affected the
heart of Helena. She rose from the table, and, passing be-
hind the chair of her aunt, she threw her arms around her
relative's neck, saying :

"Pardon me, my dearest aunt, for this inconsiderate allusion
to my father. Yet, why should the mention of his name by
me, thus agitate you? Why should I be denied the melan-
choly pleasure of hearing the memory of my parent referred
to by his sister, especially when that sister, in reverence of
him, has cherished his poor orphan daughter as her own? I
have thirsted to renew my father's virtues in my own con-
duct, and in this attempt, I, on several occasions, have ap-
plied to you; but I have in sorrow learned that you were
unequal to the task. I knew of only one other source, the
good Mr. Codicil. He knew my father. I opened my heart
to him. Taking my hand and pressing it to his lips, while
his eyes were glazed with tears, he said :

"'Helena, child of my old friend, I can give you no instruc-
tion. You are already a graceful monument to your father's
memory. You possess his virtues of heart. You are too
well taught to be a pupil, and that noble desire to attain your
parent's excellences has been your unerring preceptor. Oh,
Cavendish, my friend, that you could enjoy this hour!'

Then Mr. Codicil quitted me in haste, and though that
day has never been referred to, we never fail to speak of my
father when we meet, and through him I have learned to love
the memory of my parent more each day."

Mrs. Morley could scarcely sustain herself during this
narrative of Helena's. When it was concluded, she attempted
to rise and quit the room; but she was unable to move, and
sat gasping as if for life. She soon, however, by a powerful
exercise of will, revived, and left the breakfast room for her
own apartment. When she reappeared, some hours later, all
traces of the excitement had disappeared from her brow.
She was attired in a style of elegance which she thought due to

the magnificence of the occasion, and, approaching Helena, she kissed her on the forehead, smilingly observing:

"We must repair to the balcony, for I hear by the roll of the drums that the procession is advancing. The scene is already imposing from the numbers gathered in the streets, at the windows, and on the house-tops. We must afford the officers some more graceful welcome than is conveyed in our mere presence. Flora, gather some flowers, my love, that we may bestow them at least upon the chiefs, and as to the rank and file, they must be content with the favors of their equals. Helena, you will assist me in the distribution?"

"You will excuse me, dear aunt," replied Helena, with timidity. "I will not hesitate to appear on the balcony with you; but I can not participate in such a demonstration toward these pompous intruders as a shower of roses."

"Oh, Helena," observed Mrs. Morley, with a flush of annoyance, "you are an incorrigible rebel, and refuse to return to your allegiance even with the bayonets of your sovereign at your door."

The loud sound of musical instruments and the cries of the populace announced that the procession was near, and every eye was strained to detect the leading personages. It was soon perceived that Sir William Howe was not present, but Lord Cornwallis was. He, then, was the center of attraction. Mounted upon a powerful but impatient charger, and with head uncovered, he bowed in acknowledgment of the enthusiastic greetings from the windows, from the shops, and from the house-tops. As he reached the mansion of Mrs. Morley, that lady cast a shower of roses at his horse's feet, as if she designed them to compensate for the thorns which Washington had interposed in his march from the Brandywine to the Schuylkill. This attracted the special attention of the staff, and Cornwallis, astonished at the rare beauty of the occupants of the balcony—the mother, the daughter, and the niece—acknowledged the graceful and figurative compliment by his lowest bow and blandest smile. Then the General passed on, and the contemplation of this distinctive notice employed the mind of the proud matron until the artillery and dragoons were beyond the mansion. Then she emerged from her pleasing thoughts and cast her eyes upon the opposite

feature in the procession. It was a regiment of infantry—the gallant 40th—with Major Gordon at its head, and Sergeant Holland, with as much exultation painted in his face as was evident in that of Lord Cornwallis, marching with his company. Major Gordon was a very handsome man; and Mrs. Morley, either as a tribute to his great attractions, or to repair the long interval of inattention of which she had been guilty, plunged her hand into a basket of flowers, and threw them in the direction of the Major. The fragrant shower fell around him, and one—a blooming rose—he caught dexterously in his hand. Placing this token within his partially unbuttoned coat, he wheeled his horse around till he fronted the balcony, and putting his hand upon his heart, to indicate that the impression was cherished there, he bowed profoundly to Mrs. Morley. A deep blush crimsoned the face of the lady at this emphatic acknowledgment, and Helena, who witnessed the incident, felt indignant at the extravagant conduct of the officer toward her aunt. Suddenly, from the footway beneath the balcony, a voice rose—deep, melodious, and distinct. Three words only were spoken :

“False woman, beware!”

Helena, startled by the remarkable impressiveness of the voice, was quickly alarmed by an exclamation from her aunt, and turned to perceive her as rigid as marble—her face pervaded by the most unearthly pallor. She rushed toward the distressed woman, and, by use of much force, succeeded in gaining the room within. An expression of anguish stood fixedly upon Mrs. Morley’s face, as if some great terror had been engraved there; nor did it vanish when she soon passed into insensibility. Conveyed to her room, she did not revive for many hours. When, at length, consciousness returned, it was to find her alarm unabated. Some association blended with her terror to render her anguish keen.

“Did you not hear it, Helena?” she said. “It was no earthly sound. It was *his* voice, but he was in the air! Oh am I constrained to believe that the grave gives up its dead!”

“Dear aunt, compose yourself,” replied Helena. “You are only troubled by some frightful dream. Your physician desired that this draught should be administered when you awoke. It will renew your slumber.”

"Then I will gladly take it, Helena," replied the suffering aunt. "Any thing that will absorb my mind, and transmute memory into forgetfulness, is welcome to me. Give it me, my love—lose not a drop. I'm greedy of this panacea."

She drank the medicine, then, yielding to its powerful influence, she sunk upon the pillow, and was soon in those regions where her sorrows were unfelt.

While these agonies were being endured, the procession had passed the mansion, the multitude had descended from the house-tops, the ladies had abandoned the windows, the populace had deserted the streets. Lord Cornwallis, gratified at his flattering reception, dismissed his veterans to their quarters after the tedious parade, and the British army passed the night in revelry, to celebrate their occupation of the Halls of Congress.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAJOR'S TRIUMPH.

MRS. MORLEY was a widow, with an only daughter. Helena Cavendish was her niece, whom she had had charge of from her infancy, and, during the whole period of her young life, had made every effort to contribute to her happiness. Mrs. Morley was esteemed very wealthy; the elegance of her style was not exceeded in Philadelphia. Her society was therefore much sought, and she was engaged in a continual round of pleasure. Her daughter was, at the opening of our story, twelve years of age, her niece nineteen; the one was too young, and the other too indisposed, for much society. Unless it was at her aunt's special desire, Helena rarely attended the numerous balls and parties to which she was invited. Oscar Pembroke was a visitor at the house, and his devotion to Helena was so evident, that the blushing maiden was not altogether unprepared for the words of love he one day whispered in her ear, and still less was she inclined to condemn their repetition. Helena loved as well as Oscar.

Mrs. Morley did not approve of this young aspirant to the

hand of her niece. Oscar was not wealthy, and to her ~~any~~ mode of life but one of luxurious ease was insupportable. The ambitious aunt desired to establish her niece in a splendor equal to her own, though it was not possible for the dependent orphan to contribute to this magnificence any thing more than her amiable qualities and her beauty. Oscar felt that he could not gain the matron's approbation, even though he might have won the maiden's first affections. Impelled by duty and fired with ambition, he joined the armies of ~~the~~ country, to reap a renown as dear to the maiden's heart as it must prove all-powerful with the aunt.

When Mrs. Morley recovered from the shock received on the balcony, of words which Helena maintained were spoken by some jester in the street below, her thoughts recurred to the handsome Major Gordon, and to the distinguished manner in which he had noticed her. As her friends were Tories, and upholders of the monarchy, she was assured of an opportunity of meeting him in society.

The Major, too, a gallant bachelor of forty, treasured the rose, and waited the convenient time when he might disclose to the rich widow the veneration with which he had retained it. This coveted opportunity soon offered. A party took place to which both Mrs. Morley and Major Gordon were invited. The Major was early there, and much later in the evening the widow and her niece appeared. Both were much admired, but the younger was most eulogized, and her hand was sought by the brilliant assemblage of the British army in every dance. The Major watched Mrs. Morley with an Argus eye. He had heard such flattering statements of the wealth of the attractive widow, that he became an ardent candidate for her love. He addressed her in the blandest style. He spoke of the rose which had fallen so near his heart—of its priceless value, and of how little he conceived, when he drew his sword at Brandywine, what beauty and attraction were in the distance. He spoke with such force and sweetness that his language seemed to wind around the heart, and guide its feelings at his will. Mrs. Morley was infatuated with this accomplished soldier—could listen to no other voice than his—and it was two hours later than her usual hour of retirement when she reluctantly permitted her carriage to be called.

From that eventful night the gallant Major received a daily welcome at the Morley mansion, and was congratulated by his brother officers upon his conquest.

While Mrs. Morley thus indulged her infatuation, a tall figure was seated at a table in an obscure dwelling in Philadelphia. He was occupied in writing, and, as he occasionally paused, his head rested on one hand, as if he weighed well the subject he was committing to the outstretched paper; then, casting down his pen, he exclaimed :

"That woman's conduct troubles me, and unfits me for higher duties. I thought she would have had more reverence for her brother's memory, more consideration for the position of her poor brother's child, and more love for her bleeding country, than to think for an instant of an alliance with that scarlet-coated minion of the British crown. I have cautioned her once, and may repeat it; but, there is a perverseness in the folly of ladies of a certain age that defies all exhortation. What cares this Major for her without the garnish of her fortune? Ha, ha!" and he laughed derisively, as if that fortune were a myth. Mrs. Morley had lived many years in splendor, and it was proverbial in Philadelphia that she had not a debt unpaid. What could impair it? Only the mysterious Unknown—only Wrecker—could tell, for it was he who was the occupant of that room.

He resumed his writing, when a door opened. He turned his head in the quickness of apprehension; then, smiling at his fears, he said :

"Welcome, Spider, my faithful messenger, though you approach with all the stealthiness of an assassin. You delivered those dispatches?"

"Yes," replied Spider, "and the answer is, 'Thank you.'"

"It is the acknowledgment I asked," said Wrecker. "Have you other news?"

"I've that," said Spider, placing a letter upon the table.

"Why, this is for Miss Cavendish," exclaimed Wrecker, in surprise and anger; "a billet, I imagine, from that Captain of Light-Horse. Why did you bring it, Spider?"

"I did say I wouldn't do't till I had seen you; but the cap'n's so uneasy, since the Britishers ha' got the city, that he

wanted to come with me to see the young Miss ; so, to keep him back, I brought this letter."

"In which you are by far the more prudent of the two," said Wrecker. "What! would he wish to end a career so well begun upon a British gallows? He has not, like you the art to avoid sentinels, and would be taken and then hanged. Helena shall have the letter; take it to her this evening, and offer to convey an answer, which, no doubt, will give him such advice as he would reject from me, and disconcert him from an undertaking which would most certainly end in a death of ignominy. Now, Spider, take refreshment and rest, and, in the evening, proceed with the letter to Miss Cavendish. Use all your caution there, that the red-coats who visit at the house may not identify you."

At night Spider proceeded to the residence of Mrs. Morley. He and a soldier reached the step together from opposite directions, and Spider soon recognized the Sergeant of the 40th. The Sergeant did not so quickly remember the poor boy whom he had released from captivity a few weeks before. The rustic clothes of Spider had been discarded for things more suitable to the city, and, covered with a great-coat, he might have passed unknown, had he not whispered in the other's ear the magic word of "Brandywine." The Sergeant caught him by the hand, and shook it with the heartiness of an old comrade.

"I'm right glad to see ye," said the Sergeant, "and to find you're livin', for to this day I din't know but that you'd been slaughtered in that affair that night. Our officers were in such a rage at their defeat, that they'd a hanged anybody the next mornin'." Then he added, with a peculiar expression of the eye, that ever twinkled there when this subject was referred to : "They'd a hanged poor old Betty Dirk, on'y she died i' the night from the 'fects o' the sutler's rum. But, what is ye doin' here, boy?"

"Oh, I's born in Phil'delphy," archly replied Spider; "I's left the hill and comed to the city now; I's comed here on a errant to a lady." He assumed his old airs of a half-witted youth.

"Well, I'm comed here wi' dispatches for our Major," remarked the Sergeant. "He's a good deal quartered in this

here house, for there's a deal o' beauty here, and riches too. 'Twixt oursels, Spider, Mr. Stately, the werry worthy butler—who calls me to his pantry directly I appear, and niver fails to uncork a bottle—to'd me there'd be a marriage atween our Major and the mistress o' the mansion in a month, and that he'd take no excuse from me—the service permitting—from attendin' at the ceremonies—that is, the kitchen part on 'em. But what a while they is comin' to the door to-night."

Spider reminded the loquacious Sergeant that at night the bell must be rung—the old fashion of a "knocker" being used only by day. The bell string was pulled, and the door as promptly opened. The Sergeant was received with smiles and words of welcome, and conducted across the hall to the butler's snugger ; while Spider was left in cheerless solitude, until his attendance could be conveniently reported. Thus in the kitchen as at court, men are treated according to their standing with the higher powers.

When Helena heard that the boy—for he did not reveal his name—awaited an interview with her, she directed that he should be conducted at once to her room. There she received him with great joy, and, as she blushingly took the letter which he proffered, remarked :

"I will return in a few minutes, Spider. No one will enter here except it be your little friend Fiora, and she, I think, is too much amused just now."

"'Tis from Oscar," continued Helena, as she retired, "dear, valiant Oscar, whose fame is the theme of Philadelphia, and whose renown, as a cavalry leader, is admitted to be well earned, even by the tardy British."

Then the fair Helena opened her letter and began to read, and, as she perused the glowing sentences of Oscar, they afforded greater luster to her beauty. Soon an expression of alarm was perceptible upon her lovely face, which increased to terror, and, rushing into the room where Spider sat, she caught him by the arm, and exclaimed :

"He is not coming ! Captain Pembroke will not be so rash as to venture here ? It will be death to do so ! I have heard that cruel Major, as if my aunt had confided to him my secret, and he wished to give me what he might term an 'honorable warning,' that, if a rebel—that was his modest

term—ventured within the British lines, the penalty would be his life, let his rank or object be what it might. Oh, Spider, hasten back to him; implore Captain Pembroke, as he values my life, not thus to risk his own, and I will reward you with all that I possess."

"Lady," said Spider, almost as much alarmed at this appeal as she was at the announcement in the letter, "the Cap'n won't come—he *won't* come, lady. I told him he could *t* pass the lines, and he promised not to try, ef I'd bring th' letter to you, and he should hear what you'd say about it. P'raps he axes ye in the letter?"

At this suggestion of the shrewd boy, Helena referred to the writing in her hand, which she had not rightly read, and then a smile came upon that pallid face.

"He does say so," she exclaimed; "he does write that he will not make the venture until he has my permission. He says: 'My password is in my heart—it is Helena!—and with that I will make the passage of the Schuylkill, for the sentinel who rejected such a countersign would never again hear the music of its sound. Tell me, my Helena—'"

Hearing a slight noise, she raised her eyes, and found that it was caused by the inherent delicacy of the almost beggar boy, to whom she had been unconsciously reading a rather layish fragment from "dear Oscar's" letter. Considerable confusion, a deep blush, and a hasty retirement succeeded. When Helena was alone she viewed with admiration that refinement in the conduct of poor Spider. She at once addressed herself to the task of persuading her lover not to come to her, and acquitted herself as follows:

"Never, never, my dear Oscar, ask my permission to do that which can possibly end in ignominy. If you come to me here, come in the pride of victory, as the British came, but not in disguise and stealthiness. I have never written a word against an honorable adventure—although my blood congeals at some things said here of your astounding enterprises—but I do implore that you will dismiss from your mind all thought of a stolen visit to the city of our love, for I tell you that you can not thus tarnish your own honor without inflicting severe humility upon the heart of one who is now proud to call you her Oscar."

This letter concluded, Helena prepared to rejoin Spider. A slight blush mantled her face, and a little timidity lurked in her heart; but she was much relieved to find Flora deep in conversation with the observant boy.

"Oh, cousin Helena," exclaimed Flora, "I am so happy to meet Spider again. He has been amusing me with stories of his adventures. Since he was with us he was captured by the British, who searched and took from him the 'forget-me-not' I gave him, and said that it meant treason and a pair of spurs—locked Spider in a dungeon, and would have hung him in the morning had he not escaped in the night. How I should like to taunt the officers who visit here for this folly."

"My dear Flora," said Helena, "they might thus suspect that we correspond with the enemy."

"Yes, cousin," replied Flora, "and that, the Major says, is death."

"Then we had better not say that Spider has been here to any one beside your mamma," said Helena, "or perhaps they may attach death to him."

"I must be cotched first," observed Spider, with a grin, and the merry trio laughed heartily at this picture of the boy's danger.

"Spider," said Helena, "I must give you some little present that can admit of no such misconstruction as my cousin Flora's flower. What shall it be?"

"It must be worth something, Helena," said Flora, "for I have taken a nice ring from my finger, and with a piece of true blue ribbon, placed it round his neck."

"Spider shall name it, as I before proposed," said Helena. "What shall it be?"

Spider was encouraged by a furtive glance that he cast upon that smiling face to express his mind, and, without using words, he pointed to Helena's flowing locks.

"A lock of my hair?" asked Helena. "You shall have it, with all my heart. In other society this selection would be called gallantry; but with you, good, worthy Spider, I feel that it is the unselfish impulse of the heart."

Helena cut a lock from her hair, folded it in perfumed paper, and gave it to the boy, who, opening his coat, placed the donation upon his breast. As he had now the letter, and

the hour was getting late, he took his departure, enjoying a happiness that he had never before felt.

By a singular coincidence he again encountered Sergeant Holland. He had just issued from the butler's pantry. His roseate face and indistinctness in his converse, bore evidence that the generous Stately had been unsparing with the wine of Mrs. Morley.

"Spider, my boy," said the talkative Sergeant, as they walked unsteadily along, "'twas I that played th' part o' Betty Dirk that night. There wan't no other way to help thee, boy. I found Betty's gown and an old bonnet, and the sentinel swore 'twas she! Betty died, and couldn't deny it. But, be quiet, boy, 'twould be my ruin even now, for, if 'twere known, I shou'd be private Holland to-morrow mornin', and th' rank that I ha' bin sixteen year a mountin' to would be gone in twenty minutes."

The boy returned to Wrecker and recounted faithfully every thing that had occurred, even to the revelation of the confiding Sergeant. Tears glistened in his eyes as Spider exhibited the gift of Helena. He pressed it to his lips, and then rising from his writing and remarking that he was compelled to retire to rest, he left the room, while Spider for another hour gazed upon the gifts of the beauteous donors.

CHAPTER XI.

A QUESTION OF SETTLEMENT.

HOSTILITIES were not suspended in the vicinity of Philadelphia because the English had possession of the city. Washington was in their vicinity with his tireless though unequal army. Under the conviction that so large a force as the British could not be supplied through the winter from the resources of the district, he had made dispositions in the Delaware to prevent the replenishing by the enemy of their commissariat by that channel. To overcome this obstruction, Admiral Lord Howe quitted the Chesapeake and sailed up the

Delaware, where ensued a fiery contest between the vessels and the forts.

One of the most useful and effective corps of the American service at this period was the "Light-horse," the battalion commanded by Captain Pembroke being the most distinguished. Oscar resolved to win renown or perish, and that if he met the latter fate, it should be in the boldest exploits, with his sword in his hand. Thus he hoped to render himself worthy of the love of that dear girl who had inspired him, as well as of a patriot's place in the annals of his country's chivalry. His men were devoted to him. They shared his glory as well as his peril, and at the cheery bugle-call every man leaped gayly to his saddle. He approached the enemy warily, attacked him fiercely, and left with him a terrible memory. His name was feared in the British army, and those who had suffered from his sword, represented his advent as a meteor and the rapidity of his mischief almost fabulous. Thus the fame of Oscar sped on British tongues, and even penetrated the Morley mansion—the head of which was becoming signally "loyal." That the gentle Helena silently rejoiced that her throbbing heart had accepted such a sovereign, we may feel assured.

Grim Winter, however, came with its snows, and ice, and storms, and seasonable inflictions; but, with unusual frowns and sternness, and the army retired to winter-quarters at Valley Forge. Winter-quarters! where there was neither shelter, nor food, nor raiment provided for those worn and unclad men, whose sufferings were only equaled by their heroic endurance.

In Philadelphia, only twenty-three miles distant, it was very different. There, the ire of winter was defied by fire and plenty, and his icy frowns were scoffed at by the merry and the gay. Thus rested the hostile forces on their arms; the one starving, while the other fattened. Thus, also, rested Oscar and Helena; the arm of the latter being unable to reach to the dashing Captain of Light-horse the smallest portion of her great abundance.

Major Gordon did not fail to improve the advantage of the introduction to Mrs. Morley, which he had so craftily effected. With attractive person, accomplished manners, and agreeable

conversational powers, he generally succeeded in securing the approbation of the ladies ; but, from Mrs. Morley, he had received such distinguished notice, that it was not long before he cast himself at the feet of the affluent widow, and became her acknowledged visitor.

Helena heard of the engagement with regret. She plainly saw the sordid motives of the soldier ; but, she was powerless with her aunt, and dreaded that a disclosure of her convictions might be ascribed to feelings of jealousy, of which her mind was incapable. She therefore did not interfere. Under some influence, however, a considerable alteration was perceptible in the conduct of her aunt toward her, and the Major also treated her with as little courtesy as could be extended to a lady.

While this indifference was being displayed toward Helena, the Major was endeavoring to win the consent of his *inamorata* to an early marriage, for he doubtless deemed the tenure of the British of Philadelphia might be short, and he did not like to leave so valuable a treasure. His own property was well guarded by the sword, consisting of little more than his handsome person, his commission, and his position in society—wealth not so ineffable as to be unportable ; but, the coveted riches of Mrs. Morley were placed under the sole guardianship of the family lawyer, Mr. Codicil, who had never condescended to render her an account of income or expenditure from the period of his appointment. Notwithstanding this, Mrs. Morley had never suspected his integrity until such a probability was suggested by the Major, for Mr. Codicil never had denied her money, nor had he advised retrenchment in any of her expenditures, however extravagant. Indeed, the ease with which she replenished her treasury savored of enchantment, for she had only to summon the lawyer, express

her wish, and immediately there was an ample balance at the banker's. However charmed the widow might be with the ease and plenitude of this system of finance, it did not meet the approval of the Major. With the tenacity of the adventurous travelers that toil up the river Nile, he was anxious to ascertain the source whence the great abundance flowed ; therefore, artfully gilding the deeper subjects of his thoughts, with flattery and professions of endless love and devotion, he

conveyed to the enraptured ear of the credulous widow his desire that Codicil be requested to render a full account of his trust, that the property might be fully secured to her before marriage. This disinterestedness, intimated in the blandest words, had a magical effect upon Mrs. Morley. She resolved to summon Codicil, and relate to him her position with the Major, and his generous desire in reference to her property. The obedient lawyer responded to the call. He entered the apartment in which Mrs. Morley sat, and approached her with such cheerfulness that no one would have imagined him invited there on a matter of finance. He even thought to anticipate her wishes, by exclaiming :

" Ah, Madame, I have endeavored to fulfill your desires before you express them. A balance has been lodged with your banker equal to all your wants."

" You certainly are a most munificent treasurer," observed Mrs. Morley, " for, while I hear murmurs of suffering and hardship from every direction, I am not permitted to share the general distress; but there is another confidential matter on which I am desirous of consulting you."

Here the lady paused as if there was a stubbornness in the subject that could not be readily reduced to words; but she was not the less resolved upon her course of action because of her woman's diffidence.

" You are acquainted with Major Gordon ?" continued Mrs. Morley.

" You are aware of the extent of our intimacy, Madame," replied Codicil. " It commenced at your residence. We have met at no other place."

" He is a soldier of distinction," said Mrs. Morley; and then, after a struggle, with her eyes cast upon the carpet, she added: " and has addressed to me the highest compliment that man can confer on woman."

" Indeed !" said Codicil, with gravity and deliberation.

Mrs. Morley did not like this exclamation of the lawyer. It sounded reproachfully in her ear. During the profound silence that ensued he amused himself gazing intently, and with a compassionate look, upon the portraits of Helena and Flora which were suspended in the room; but the widow, having " broken the ice," boldly continued the revelation:

"I have listened to him with encouragement—with love—and, as a consequence, he has spoken of marriage."

"Humph!" exclaimed Codicil, when he thus came in possession of the whole fact; and then he sarcastically added "I trust that this martial Briton, of whose distinction you speak so flatteringly, has an equal share of property to that with which he may suppose you to be garnished."

Mrs. Morley was offended at this rude criticism; but she restrained her anger.

"I have not been influenced in my preference by any such sordid motive," she replied.

"And do you imagine that *he* has been as unbiased in *his* selection?" asked the lawyer. "Do you believe that he did not cast wealth into the scale in which he estimated the *value* of the woman? Or, has the distinguished officer never referred to pecuniary matters?"

"In conversation, he has alluded slightly to my affairs; but then only as a matter between you and I, and in his anxiety to place all beyond his own control. But, I wish to reward this unselfishness in him. The many years' accumulations of surplus income, which you have often told me remain in your hands, I wish to be paid to Major Gordon on the morning of my marriage."

"A most liberal arrangement for the Major," replied the lawyer, with a smile, "if it could be accomplished."

"Is there any difficulty?" inquired Mrs. Morley.

"Why, Madame," replied the lawyer, "before you afford this munificent bounty for a husband—for I assure you the sum is very large—I think you ought to consider what is due to Helena. In forming this new association your attachment as well as your sense of justice toward her may be weakened, and she ought to be protected against the contingency. Helena must be provided for."

"Must!" exclaimed the angry woman.

"Yes, Madame, must," responded the inflexible lawyer. "I might have used a less absolute term, but it might not have so fully conveyed to you my purpose."

"Your language is insulting, sir," said Mrs. Morley.

"You mistake a resolute expression for one of insolence," replied the lawyer. "Remember, that, as the trustee of that

wrether from whom you enjoy this vast property, I may well feel indignant when you attempt to confer a large portion of that wealth upon a stranger, an Englishman, a British soldier while his fair daughter—his only child—is allowed to remain portionless—a dependent upon your bounty."

"Helena is not my brother's daughter," replied the agitated widow.

"Madame," exclaimed the excited lawyer, "is it thus you honor the memory of your brother, of his beloved wife, and sustain the name of their daughter, Helena? Would you taunt with infamy the child of one whose name is above reproach, and who has made *you* affluent? Pause in this guilty course while there is time to recede. Reject the English soldier. Dismiss from your mind the criminal thought of endowing him with the wealth that rightfully belongs to Helena, or, depend upon it, that the shade of Horace Cavendish will return to life to thwart your schemes to your own ruin."

This severe rebuke of the lawyer caused Mrs. Morley the deepest emotion. She fell back upon the couch on which she was sitting, and, without uttering a word in reply, seemed struggling with her anguish. The effect produced did not escape the observation of the lawyer. He gazed upon the beauty of the widow's face and hoped that he had sown contrition in her heart. Leaving the seed to germinate, he quitted the apartment, apparently unheeded by the almost despairing inmate. As he crossed the hall in his passage to the entrance door, intent upon the incidents of the interview from which he had just withdrawn, a gentle hand was placed upon his arm as if to restrain him in his haste. He turned, expecting to encounter the repentant looks of Mrs. Morley, for she occupied his mind; but he was greeted by the smiling countenance of Helena. He clasped both her hands; but before he could address her, she exclaimed:

"Ah, you are false to me, Mr. Codicil; but you shall not escape without the usual tribute of half an hour; so, for that period, you are my captive;" she drew him gently toward a small drawing-room where she usually sat.

"Few captives but would rejoice at being in such chains," said the gallant lawyer; "but so far from being false, I would consign to death the man who would be guilty of such villainy."

"What a terrible threat," exclaimed Helena; "but, I will never confide to you the names of my enemies, for it would be like passing upon them a sentence of extirpation." Then, as the playful smile vanished from her face, she almost whispered: "Have you any tidings of the state of those poor sufferers at Valley Forge?"

"I have not heard for many days," replied Codicil. Divining from the subject, he asked: "Do you attend the garrison ball to-morrow evening?"

"I feel the keen reproach of your question," remarked Helena, "that I should lavish moneys in preparations for these British entertainments, which would be more suitably employed in retaining life in the impoverished patriots who so patiently maintain their ground, despite hunger and raggedness in those frightful winter-quarters. But I feel no pleasure in those gayeties. They are repugnant to my feelings, and I endure them in deference to my aunt."

"I mean no reproach, dear Helena," said Codicil. "I know your heart, and would not utter a word to add to the distress occasioned by these scenes of dissipation. I have, however, a friend who will be there. He knew your father and your mother, and you may confide in him without restraint."

The fair girl was deeply affected at this allusion to her parents. She inclined her head upon the shoulder of her venerable friend, and sobbed:

"Oh, how consolatory it is to speak of those whom I so much revere. Their names ever excite emotions in my aunt that forbids a recurrence to the subject; and you, dear, good, worthy Mrs. Codicil, mention them with reserve. Why should I be denied—"

"Stay but till to-morrow evening," interposed the lawyer, "and you will meet this stranger. He is more privileged to speak of your family than I, and probably will do so; and you may question him as unreservedly as if he were your father."

Mr. Codicil departed, and the heart of Helena was made lighter by the hope of meeting a friend of those dear parents whom she had never seen.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHADOW ON THE WALL.

IT was nearly an hour before Mrs. Morley aroused herself from her fit of anguish, yet the agony of mind had not been fruitful of remorse. She still felt that the large accumulation of surplus revenue should become the property of the Major, and she also resolved that if Codicil would not prepare the settlements as directed, she would marry Major Gordon without the execution of these documents, which she conceived would give him the right of a husband to battle with the lawyer.

When, therefore, Major Gordon made his usual call and found her indisposed, she was induced, with apparent reluctance, to disclose to him that her illness was attributable to an unpleasant altercation with her lawyer. The detail was soon added to the fact, and the Major ascertained that, in Mrs. Morley's attempt to settle the surplus funds upon him instead of upon Helena, she had offended the trustee. The Major affected great indignation toward the lawyer, looked threateningly, and even touched the hilt of his sword, as if his resentment were in the scabbard ; but, he secretly rejoiced at this disruption between lawyer and client, for he hoped to be a gainer by the feud, in defeating both the caution of the one and the personal settlement of the other.

"These callous men," said the Major, "are impediments to happiness. No sooner is a union decided than they seek to obstruct it by the drag-wheel of the law. I care not for property. Let him keep it all ; but, I am anxious to possess the only charm I have for life."

"The property is unalienably mine," remarked the widow with a slight blush at the flattery of the Major ; "that can not be prevented ; but, if you should not so insist upon the settlement before our union, we need not be at the mercy of this lawyer."

"The settlement ought to be executed before our marriage," replied the Major, quietly exulting in his success. "It

may be said that I am selfish and that you are foolish; that you have improperly committed the fortunes of Miss Cavedish and Flora to my honor and generosity, instead of to the inflexible documents of your lawyer, and thus your names might suffer for a time."

"Think you," said the widow, "that I would not as freely intrust my property to you, as my happiness? I have no faith in these provisional features in a marriage contract, and, had it not been in deference to your own scruples, I would not have named the subject to Mr. Codicil."

"I am a convert to your doctrine," replied the Major. "Our felicity shall no longer depend on the anger or indulgence of this obdurate man; but, when our union is completed, I will *demand* of him an equitable reckoning of his trust."

Thus both these seemingly dexterous gamesters were seeming winners, though each thought the other had been outwitted. Codicil, however, was the more sagacious. He foresaw the next movement. As he left the house to return home he met Major Gordon.

"There he is. He is going to see her," said Codicil to himself. "He sneers, and superciliously, too. Surely he can not divine my thoughts as I do his! Why, I am thinking aloud. He must have heard me. Well, he will marry her. She confiding in his honor, and he thinking to get possession of her property. Then will follow the sequel to this amusing farce, which will supply a good moral, where the wicked are punished and the worthy are rewarded."

The evening of the garrison ball arrived, and the hearts of the ladies of the Morley mansion palpitated with hope. Adorned with care and elegance, they drove to the hall. The Major met them at the entrance, and conducted them to the ball-room. It was an apartment of great proportions and elaborately decorated with the missiles of war. There were devices of polished daggers, swords, pistols, carbines, and muskets, which, receiving the luster of the brilliant chandeliers which depended from the center of the hall, reflected them in dazzling radiancy around the room. Flags and banners floated in abundance, and the rich and varied costumes of the cavalry and infantry officers—English, Scotch, Irish and German—gave

to the assemblage the character of a fancy ball. The courteous Sir William Howe, bowing to all whom he recognized, stood at the end of the room, and Lord Cornwallis loitered near him, while the Hessian Knyphausen, elaborately decorated, trod proudly upon the floor which now added to the opulence of the monarchy. Lord Cornwallis, though apparently so unobservant, soon perceived the extreme beauty of Helena, and sent one of his staff to the Major to request ~~an~~ introduction, which was followed by an engagement for the dance. His Lordship was merry and agreeable, and was as pleasant in the ball-room as he was stubborn in the field. Two or three dances succeeded, when Helena missed her aunt. She had departed from the seat she had occupied, and Helena was alone. She was in some consternation at this incident, when a figure placed himself beside her, and, upon looking, she perceived the welcome visage of the worthy Codicil.

"Welcome, my dear friend," exclaimed Helena, with joy "I have been seeking you with my eyes all the evening."

"What, in spite of the dazzling partners who have led you to the dance," said Codicil, "with General Cornwallis at their head?"

"It was not for such empty distinctions as these that I came here," replied Helena.

"Empty distinctions!" repeated the lawyer. "Is that the language in which you characterize a dance with General Lord Cornwallis? Why, we shall finish the entertainment in the guard-house if we be overheard. Take my arm, and let us walk into more obscurity."

Helena readily accompanied Codicil through a suite of smaller rooms. As they were passing, Helena said in a low voice to her companion:

"Who is that gentleman—he that is so tall, with the massive head and portly figure? I feel drawn toward him, although there is much severity in the expression of his face."

"That is your father's friend," replied Codicil, "I will introduce you."

"It is needless," said Helena; and, stepping up to him, she continued: "I am Helena Cavendish, the daughter of

your friend. I love my father—I revere his memory; but there my devotion ceases. If he be living, I am denied the knowledge, and can not contribute to his happiness. Tell me, in mercy, if I, indeed, be an orphan, or have a father to love."

"Be more calm, my sweet girl," said the stranger, pressing his hand to her lips, and placing his other hand upon her hair shoulder; "supposing I tell you that your father lives, but that his raggedness and his poverty keep him from your presence; that he is homeless, and has no place to rest his head."

"Then," cried Helena, "I will cast off these gaudy trappings, dismiss these lustrous jewels, clothe myself in serge, and, quitting the bounty of my aunt, will share the poverty of my father. Night and morning I will kneel beneath the tree under which we may repose, and thank my God for the privilege and blessing that he has vouchsafed."

"Thou hast the soul of an angel, thou divinest of human creatures," exclaimed the enchanted stranger; "how could a father thus separate himself from such a daughter?"

"Not a word of reproach against that sacred name!" cried Helena. "Yet, tell me, shall I see him?"

"You shall see him!" exclaimed the stranger, in agitation.

She exclaimed, as she clasped his hand:

"Oh, what a measure of joy you have given me! Complete, I implore, the promise you have uttered. Let there be no delay. Let me quit this false state for the poverty of my parent, that the labor of my hands may be the means of his better sustenance."

"Thou sweetest of earth's daughters," exclaimed the stranger, with great emotion, as a tear fell from his eye upon her cheek. "But, be calm. We have both been hurried into forgetfulness, and have only been defended from observation by the busy prudence of the inestimable Codicil, whom I now perceive posted at the entrance of this apartment, humorously turning every one aside who attempts to enter. Let us relieve this trusty sentinel."

They walked forth; but the stranger directed his steps to the less frequented rooms. Helena hung upon his arm. The

merry dance was no longer thought of. The music was supplanted by the melody of the stranger's voice, and the protection of her aunt seemed more than compensated by that of this acquaintance of an hour. He declined to speak much of her father or her mother, alleging that it would be presumptive in him to anticipate the narrative of the surviving parent, which she would soon have in his own words. He contrasted the miseries endured at Valley Forge with the luxuries enjoyed in Philadelphia. There, he said, the only cries were those of hunger and want. The love of liberty could not be sustained upon such wretched fare, except among the most indomitable people in the world. Then he referred to the valor of Washington's army, meager as it was, and to the deeds of personal courage exemplified in individuals, and while the heart of Helena fluttered when he enumerated the many gallant affairs that had attracted his own notice, it experienced a new delight when he added that he himself had been rescued from death by the bravery and coolness of a Captain of Light-horse named Pembroke.

"Oscar Pembroke!" exclaimed Helena. "Oh, what a service he has rendered me by this act of gallantry."

"You know him, I perceive," said the stranger. "So, although you attend the balls of these loyal popinjays, you have your secret sympathies at Valley Forge as well as myself."

A guilty blush—those vile betrayers of inward feelings—suffused the face of Helena, as she met the expressive eyes of the stranger, which were even more significant than his words.

"My heart is in the American cause," she commenced; but, at that moment, two figures passed so close to Helena and the stranger, that the dress of the lady swept the feet of the former.

"There goes your aunt," said the stranger; "see how she clings to the arm of that loyal scarlet-coat. She is infatuated with that Saxon Major, who would have slaughtered me but for the steady hand and true eye of the gallant young Pembroke."

"Are you known to my aunt?" asked Helena, in astonishment.

"I was many years ago," replied the stranger; "but I shall renew the acquaintance, notwithstanding I may have to fear the frowns of that suitor Major. Then, dear Helena, you and I may be better known; for, with your father I will also appear. I will participate in the restoration of father to daughter, and child to parent. Your father and I have been wanderers together. We have shared each other's sorrows and deprivations, and, now that I have found him such a daughter I, too, hope for a niche in that sweet heart."

They had now entered a conservatory, where the fragrance vied with the beauty of the flowers, and the one was as delicious as the other was glorious. There were others in the conservatory, but no one in their immediate vicinity. They sat down and enjoyed the beauty and variety of these prodigies of nature. Here they conversed long and earnestly, forgetting that time was passing. Then a slight noise was heard, and the stranger arose.

"I have already prepared you for a sudden departure, and I fear I must quit you now; but, dearest Helena, if there be truth in man, your father shall press you to his heart in a few days."

"Dear, good friend, farewell," exclaimed Helena; "I would rather doubt the sun, and moon, and the succession of night to day, than thee."

"Be seated, love," said the stranger, with great emotion, as he led her to a seat, and pressed his lips upon her forehead, and quickly passed away.

Then a door opened, and a light so dazzling that Helena was blinded by its luster, shone into the conservatory. Suddenly she heard, in the same deep voice, these ominous words:

"*False woman, beware!*"

A scream was uttered from a distant part of the conservatory, and when Helena looked in that direction, there, in shadow upon the wall, stood the handsome person of the stranger. He had a finger raised, as if in menace; but, it was perfectly distinct and definable. She quickly directed her eye to the spot where she had last seen the stranger; but he was gone, and there was no one within view but Mr Codicil, who, with a placid smile upon his face, was slowly

approaching her. But, similar screams to that she had first heard, were now repeated, and she hastened to ascertain the cause. She found her aunt struggling in hysteria, with no other support than that afforded by Major Gordon. Helena relieved him, and dispatched him for assistance; but, no effort of doctor or niece could restore her faculties. In this state of suffering it was thought advisable to convey her to her residence, whither she proceeded in her own carriage. During the night there was no appearance of returning reason. The faithful Helena sat by her bed, watching every movement. With the morning came better symptoms. Mrs. Morley became calm—then sensible; then seemed to reflect upon her position, and at length motioned for Helena to quit the room. It was the first unkind act that Helena had known her aunt to practice toward her. She felt the indignity acutely, although willing to attribute it to a morbid rather than to a reflective feeling. But, the great panacea for her grief was the hope that she should soon meet her father. If she dwelt upon the sudden anger of her aunt, this hope smiled through it, and made her heart more buoyant.

The same evening, however, Mrs. Morley, who had improved in health, requested that Helena should be summoned to her room; but the latter could perceive that there was a difference in manner—whether promoted by that strange shadow on the wall, by Major Gordon, or by some other incident of that eventful night, she thought that time would develop—though it seemed evident that the same cause which produced those agonizing cries, turned the semblance of love that Mrs. Morley affected toward Helena to open indifference.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ALTAR SCENE.

IT was wonderful how rapidly Mrs. Morley recovered from that terrible prostration. The doctors were surprised, and ascribed it to the effort of her strong will, which, in two days

had conquered the impulse of an almost fatal shock, and enabled her to receive select friends in her boudoir. The most welcome of these favored guests was Major Gordon, with whom she sat some hours in conversation. When the gallant soldier quitted her presence, there were smiles of satisfaction upon his visage, not visible to those watchful agents of our humors—the servants—upon his entrance. To one person, at least, the degree of success that had attended this able diplomatist was soon unfolded, for Helena was quickly requested to attend her aunt.

"Helena," said Mrs. Morley, upon her entrance, "I infer from your intimacy with Mr. Codicil, that he has informed you that I am about to be married to Major Gordon."

"I assure you, aunt," said Helena, "that Mr. Codicil has not mentioned the subject, and I wish I could add that I now first hear of the alliance from your mouth; but, it is not so—I could not close my ears to the general rumors of the house."

"The 'house,' as you term it," observed Mrs. Morley, pettishly, "employs much of its time in matters for which it is not engaged; but, I will not forget this hint in my future instructions to my servants. But to revert to my purpose. The Major is anxious to be married very soon—as early as next week, and, knowing that his reasons are urgent, I have reluctantly yielded to his wish. I have explained to him your position, and my relation to you. He is most generous, and desires that you will remain with us on the same footing as heretofore."

"I decline this munificence of the Major," replied Helena, with a struggle to repress severer words that lingered on her tongue.

"Decline!" exclaimed Mrs. Morley, in astonishment. "Are you mad? Or have you formed a marriage engagement with that Captain Pembroke, whose 'Light-horse,' the Major says, 'tis but a herd of freebooters—mere Arabs of the plain?'

"No, aunt, I have no thought of marriage," replied Helena; "but I will correct that mis-impression which the Major has placed in your mind in reference to the 'Light-horse.' Lord Cornwallis named them to me as a corps of the most gallant men."

"Or, yes," replied Mrs. Morley, peevishly, "that is *carap* talk, I believe. But what is your object in thus rejecting the *shelter* of a roof that has covered you from infancy? What other design can influence you? You have no property--you are *friendless*. You have no choice between my continued patronage and beggary."

"Still, I choose the latter," replied Helena. "A duty more sacred even than the gratitude I owe to you for having raised me in the soft lap of luxury from infancy beckons me from affluence to poverty—from this house of elegance to be a homeless wanderer."

"Child, who has injected this poison into your ear?" cried Mrs. Morley. "Who has taught you that there is a higher claimant to your obedience than what is due to me?"

Elena did not respond.

" Cediceil is at the bottom of this estrangement," interposed Mr. Morley, vehemently. " His false tongue has found a willing listener in you. But, I will quickly be avenged. I warn you against the intrigues of him and whoever may be his confederates. We will dismiss this subject, and revert to that on which I summoned you. In the approaching ceremony I wish you and Flora to attend me as bridesmaids. You will, therefore, make immediate preparation. I am too unwell to speak more, and too indisposed to listen to another sentence."

Helena retired to her room, and shed abundance of tears. The imputations of her aunt wounded her too deeply for words. She felt their injustice, and then, for the first time, had suspicions that behind all was some painful secret. Her faith in Codicil and the stranger was unimpaired. She resolved, however, to prepare for the wedding of her aunt. It might, perhaps, be the closing scene of their association, and she wished to render her aunt obedience to the hour of separation.

The preparation for Mrs. Morley's marriage was the topic of the city. The gossips affected great astonishment. They remarked that sudden deaths were events that could not be controlled; but that undue haste in marriage was quite another thing. This idle tattle, however, was unheard by the principals and disregarded by the wise, and the splendor of the

preparations went on undiminished. On the evening before the momentous day, Helena and her cousin Flora sat in their own room alone. They had been inspecting their dresses and other ornaments for the wedding, when Flora suddenly asked :

" Why don't you marry Captain Pembroke, cousin Helena?"

" My dearest love," exclaimed Helena, blushing deeply " you quite alarm me by such a question. You must not speak thus inconsiderately."

" Is it so wrong, then, Helena?" said little Flora; " because I speak to mamma of Major Gordon, and she likes it; but, when I name Captain Pembroke to you, you chide me."

" Yes, dear Flora," said Helena, " the relations between your mamma and the Major, and me and Captain Pembroke, are widely different. She is engaged to be married. I am not. We will therefore speak no more about it."

" But, Helena," continued the wayward Flora, " I like sometimes to speak of Captain Pembroke, for I am a rebel as well as he, and I am enraged to hear the Major, while he drinks mamma's wine, laugh at the misery of the great Washington's men at Valley Forge; besides, Marie, mamma's maid, says that there may one day be another Flora, and she will be Flora Gordon, and, as that is to be mamma's name to-morrow, I shail be the only Morley, and that I shall be put upon the shelf. What is the meaning of 'upon the shelf,' Helena?"

" It is a very foolish expression, and a very improper one to you," said Helena. " Forget it, Flora, as you must all else that Marie has said, and we will go to our sewing-room and take another peep at our fine dresses."

This suggestion decoyed the little prattler from her subject. Flora twined her arm around her fair cousin's waist, and marched to a second feast on the splendor of the morrow.

There were those in Philadelphia who counted the seconds that night, and silently reproached Time for his slothful movement; but, that old traveler heeded not the rail; he still pursued his flight on an unaltered, tireless wing. In due season, he gently drew aside the screen that hid the day. Then the inmates of the Morley mansion prepared for the great

occasion. Every effort was made to decorate the bride, and to banish every impress of age stamped upon her countenance since she was first led to the altar by Mr. Morley. So successful were the devices of the artistes that the metamorphosis even took the bridegroom by surprise.

At the hour arranged the bride and her attendants stepped into their carriage, and soon alighted at the church. The scene was now quite dazzling. The ladies, attired in satin and rich lace, and adorned with jewels, were grouped with many officers, whose scarlet coats and bullion epaulets contributed to produce a most effective contrast. This imposing assemblage advanced in procession up the aisle of the sacred structure to the altar, where the minister stood prepared to perform the ceremony. This proceeded, and the bridegroom had pledged his troth to the bride, and she had repeated hers to him, when her eye wandered down the altar steps. There stood before her something that chilled her to the soul. A frightful scream escaped her that sounded along the aisles, and was re-echoed from the roof of that old edifice, as if a ghostly spectacle, real or imaginary, had been seen by the unhappy bride.

But one spectator was there who stood at the foot of the altar steps. He was attired in black, was of commanding presence, and his placid face indicated that he contemplated the assemblage of so much beauty with interest. Only one of that large party had suspicion of the stranger. She stole a furtive glance at him, and recognized her friend of the garrison ball. Who was this mysterious visitor? Was he friend or foe? What was there in his presence which so terrified her aunt?

A thousand hopes and fears rushed through the mind of Helena, as she assisted in supporting her aunt. Nothing could now appease Mrs. Gordon, whose screams continued with increased frightfulness. She was conveyed along these solemn aisles, to the church entrance, and the same carriage which so lately conveyed the smiling widow to the church, now returned with her an almost insane bride.

Thus the mirth at the Morley mansion was converted into grief. Instead of the ring of merriment and the pledge of happiness, were heard the moans of suffering. The wedding

breakfast—a regal banquet in its character—remained untouched ; and the choice wines, which were to have contributed their energy to the feast, remained imprisoned in their glassy cells—the whole a scene of abandoned splendor.

The day passed wearily on, and there was no alleviation in the affliction of the bride ; but toward night the doctors had succeeded in producing comparative tranquillity. They hoped that slumber would ensue. While awaiting with anxiety this event, a poor man presented himself at the door, and requested to see Miss Cavendish. The servant in attendance shook his head.

"If ye want marriage dole, my good old friend," he said, "we've none to give. All our joy is turned to sorrow—all our laughin' ha' bin washed away in tears."

"I want no dole," replied the man, "I have a message for the young lady that she will be gratified to hear."

"You've all plenty of excuses of that kind," replied the servant, as if suspicious of this plea to procure an audience ; "but come in ; I'll get some o' the women-folk to tell her—but we're in great trouble."

"Yes, she'll see ye," said the servant, on his return, "but she refused till she heard that ye were very poor, and then she gave in. Rub them old shoes upon the mat ; now put down that old hat, for I'm told to lead you to the library, and *in course* we must be as particular as we can."

The poor visitor was obedient to directions. He rubbed his shoes, threw down his shattered hat, and followed the servant to the room appointed, who then left him with the caution of "Don't touch nothin." A light step was heard approaching hastily ; soon the door opened, and Helena entered.

"Ah, my poor friend," cried she, regarding him, "tell me your wants in the fewest possible words, and I will assist you ; but the illness of my aunt demands all my attention, and I have almost stolen these few moments from the fear that your distress might be too urgent to be neglected."

Some intense feeling seemed to agitate the breast of the poor mendicant. He could not speak, and his eyes were glazed with tears. Helena ever felt deep sympathy for suffering age. She approached nearer to him, and, attempting to inspire him with more confidence, said :

" Speak to me as a friend—as one who esteems it a privilege to relieve the distress of the aged—"

" Helena!" interposed the agitated man, " my child!—my only child!"

" My father!" exclaimed Helena, as she clasped her hands in deep emotion.

" Your father! responded the poor man.

The girl rushed to his outstretched arms, and pressed his cheek with her soft lips. He, too, held his fair daughter to his throbbing heart, and, in silence, they enjoyed that mental felicity too exquisite for words.

" Oh, father! father!" at length exclaimed Helena, " we will never part. This meeting must not be unhallowed by a separation. Tell me, father, that you concur in this."

" Helena, my dear love," said the old man, " can I, penniless, entice you from an opulent home to share my indigence, merely to gratify the selfishness of my own heart?"

" Oh, hear me, my dear father," interposed Helena. " You do not think that I appreciate the comforts of affluence above the joys of filial love? You can not think that I will permit wealth to be a friend with me, while poverty is an associate with you? No, no, dear father; homeless and penniless as you are, I will share your destitution. I will endeavor to lighten your affliction, and you will reward me with your love. The fullness of our hearts shall more than atone for the emptiness of our purse."

" We must not, will not part, dear love!" exclaimed the father. " Until this moment I did not fully comprehend your angelic nature. So like your dear, beloved mother!"

They sat and talked together for some time, the rough coat of the father around the soft, fair neck of his daughter, and this devoted girl enjoying the embrace in the fullness of her heart. At length they adjourned to Helena's own rooms, where there was no likelihood of interruption, for the doctors used the library in consultation, and might, at any moment, be there.

" Sit by my side, dear Helena," said the father, as he sunk into the easy cushions of a luxurious couch, as if this beggar parent were accustomed to such indulgence, " and I will relate to you the chief incidents of my life—at least that

terrible blow to my happiness which caused me to abandon you—a crime for which I have been properly and severely punished.

"I am the elder of two children of an opulent English merchant. My companion was a sister. My father was a man of colossal dealings; but, through a series of reverses, his affairs became embarrassed, and, notwithstanding every effort to avert the dreaded calamity, he was declared a bankrupt. He was possessed of a handsome estate, consisting of several thousand acres, which was divided into farms, and let to numerous tenants. These farms surrounded a manorial mansion, which my father retained for his own residence. This estate was not available to creditors under the English law; but my father was a man of scrupulous integrity, and proposed to yield this property, that every creditor might receive his full demand, and his character be preserved untarnished. The penalty, of course, was utter ruin, in a wordly view; but, this he preferred to sacrifice of name. When the time arrived to consummate this generous offer, the title-deeds of the estate could not be found. The chest in which they were supposed to be securely stored had been forced, and these evidences of right abstracted—not a parchment had been left to mark either the haste or carelessness of the thief. The creditors were furious, and did not confine their invectives to my father's ear, so that the matter soon became public, and the wily tenantry refused to pay more rent, alleging that they no longer knew to whom the property belonged.

"Thus reviled by his creditors, and defied by his tenants, he applied to the Court of Chancery to restore his title; but his creditors, suspecting he intended to resume possession of the estate, made such strong and numerous affidavits against him, that his petition was summarily dismissed. Thus toiled by the very men for whose interests he was making these exertions, integrity toward them was still the ruling passion of his mind. He had an only brother who had amassed a large fortune in this country, and to him he wrote describing his position, and asking him to loan him sufficient funds until he could recover his estate. This my worthy uncle most readily did, and then my noble father discharged every debt to the veriest penny. Then these fierce vultures became tame

as ambling fawns, and among other fulsome acts they invited him to renew his petition for the restoration of his title and they would support his prayer. He rejected their offers with disdain, nor would he again ask justice of that merciless court. He determined, however, to cause every effort for the recovery of the deeds.

" My mother had died before these painful circumstances ensued. Before his marriage my father was engaged to a lady of considerable personal attractions, but, her coquettish habits so offended his delicacy that he withdrew from the obligation, and attached himself to one who could better esteem the value of his love. The lady vowed revenge for the indignity. It was not until this juncture that, by the most diligent inquiries, my father discovered that this lady, under the name of Margaret Dowlas, with a face stained to the color of a creole, and cap and other articles of dress to affect the appearance of greater age, had lived in his residence for many years as *housekeeper*. Here this terrible woman watched some means of effecting the destruction of her former suitor, and no doubt saw in the removal of these deeds, an eventual though a distant ruin. Her revenge was complete as it was dreadful, for it drove my father to an early grave. After advertising this false fair one in every paper of repute, and employing many secret agents to hunt her from her concealment, and finding all his efforts fruitless, his great courage failed him ; he sickened, and soon joined my mother in eternity, leaving me and my sister, I just twelve and she ten years of age.

" We were taken to a friend's house to await instructions from my uncle as to our disposal. I pressed my sister to my heart and swore to protect her through life, and she, smiling through her tears, replied that her devotion was as true as fasting. It was the genuine feeling of infant hearts, before they had been corrupted by contact with the world. In due time, letters were received from my uncle. He said that we should be his children, and directed that our education should be continued in England. Through agents of his own he remitted ample funds for all contingencies, and we each went to our tasks with a determination to reward such generosity by diligence.

" We had no home, and our vacations were employed in visiting some of the many friends of our father and our uncle. Thus time passed on till our education was completed, when we prepared to join our uncle in this country. We quitted England with regret; but, that was softened by the hope of expressing personally our gratitude to the kind uncle who had endeavored to smooth the rugged path of our poor father and been such a generous donor unto us. We reached this city and were received by my uncle in this house. Here he resided in affluence, a wealthy, happy, and contented bachelor. He was delighted with us. He would not listen to our thanks; but silenced us by replying that, if our conduct were as flattering as our appearance he should be more than repaid. We were soon put in responsible positions. Kate had the jurisdiction of the house, I of his business, and I believe that there never were two more trusty functionaries.

" Two years I reveled in this unbounded happiness, when, one evening, at a ball I danced with a young lady, whom I thought the most lovely of her sex. Her gentle and receding manners were to me other features of attraction, and I, after improving my acquaintance by some weeks of daily visitation, found that she was necessary to my life. I disclosed my attachment and discovered that a corresponding passion possessed her own bosom. I dared not name the subject to my uncle, for he had an inveterate hatred to the family, not because they were poor, but from some cause of dislike less insurmountable than that. Still, I would not live without her. I married her, and the only person present besides the officiating minister was my sister Kate. I could conceive no happiness beyond my own. After some months my wife removed to a friend's residence in the country. Of this friend she made a confidant, and then it was arranged that she should remain with her until you were born. One Saturday I had left home on a visit to my Helena, and had not been with her more than two hours when we heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs ringing on the road, approaching the house. I rose in alarm at this unusual sound, and stepping upon the porch was immediately recognized by the horseman, who forced a billet into my hand from my sister, stating that my uncle was suddenly taken ill and that the doctors were doubtful

of his recovery. I returned to Helena's room, I cast my arms around her, bade her farewell, and then mounting my horse, flew with the utmost speed to Philadelphia. Alas, I only reached the house of death. My father, uncle, friend, and guardian had expired in one breath. I rushed into the house, and throwing myself upon a couch, there groaned in deep penitence for the deception I had practiced against so noble a friend. Kate came to soothe me. She brought me my uncle's blessing, and said, the last words he uttered were :

"Poor boy, poor boy, he will be too late!"

"As soon as I recovered from the acuteness of my anguish I dispatched a messenger to your mother, informing her of the event, and she returned me words of great solace to my troubled heart. My uncle had bequeathed a handsome fortune to my sister, and to me the residue of his great wealth. I gazed on his soft, benevolent face as he lay in the cold chill of death, and again lamented that I had so treacherously cheated him of that confidence to which he was entitled.

"The day after the funeral of my uncle, a messenger arrived announcing that I was a father—that you, Helena, were born; but, the dispatch added that symptoms had ensued which were of such a doubtful nature that the doctor thought my presence advisable. The agitation that I had undergone caused me to put the worst construction upon this communication. I hastened to my Helena, begging Kate to follow me with all convenient speed. When I reached the house, all looked grave and sad. I was not congratulated as a father. My tongue was as silent as the dumb folks I met—I could not speak. With my strong arm I forced them all aside, and almost leaped up the staircase toward my dear Helena's room. At the door stood a figure with its hand upraised. This is a Masonic sign among the suffering. I respected it and paused.

"What?" I whispered. "Is—is—is—"

"No, no!" cried my poor wife's friend. "Helena is very ill. She wishes to see you; but you would not enter the room of sickness in this frenzy!"

"I felt the reproach and became gentle as a lamb, and my considerate monitor admitted me to the chamber of Helena. In an instant I heard the faint cry of 'Horace!' It was from

one who ever had her eye upon the door, and that instant I was upon my knees by her side. You were motherless before midnight.

"I will not attempt to describe the chaos of my feelings at this appalling circumstance. Nor can I, for I was relieved from half the horror of the first six months by intervals of insanity. At length my despair assumed a calmness; but the joy of my heart was gone—my happiness had fled—and nothing but a vagrant life was endurable to my restlessness and agony. I committed you to the care of your aunt, and placed my affairs in the hands of Codicil, or, rather, he took charge of them, for I had no need of such worthless matters. I wandered through the world and was three years absent. When I returned I called upon Codicil, from whom I learned that Kate had married Mr. Morley—that you were in health, and growing like your mother. He had, upon his own responsibility, allowed a handsome sum for your maintenance and care. I approved all that he had done. Refused to see you or my sister, and again wandered forth in my restlessness. Four years transpired before I again saw Codicil. Then I learned that Morley had died after spending every penny of my sister's fortune, leaving her and little Flora without the necessaries of life. These were supplied by Codicil from my funds, and when I arrived he was, in his love of economy, seriously contemplating removing you from the mansion.

"This alteration I would not permit. I increased the income of your aunt, and the next year desired Codicil to announce my death, and that I had left in his hands a deed of gift by which all my property was assigned to her, reminding her at the same time that she must provide for you, and that not niggardly. Since that time I have not quitted the country. My chief refuge has been in the cabin of an old crew on the banks of the Chesapeake, where, under the name of Woecker, I am well known. In opposing these English intruders I have not been inactive. Although not in the army I am friendly with many of its leaders, and have contributed to its success, or rather, perhaps, have preserved it from annihilation. The unlimited supply of money which I have insisted should be supplied to your aunt, against every argument

of Codicil, have made her haughty and unprincipled, and she has taken part with the British because she thought them, in the weakness of her mind, the most attractive people. I have warned her twice in a voice she could not misapprehend, but that she has disregarded, and has not only allowed herself to be conducted to the altar by this man whose sword is unsheathed against her kindred, but she has denied the settlement of a comparatively small pittance on that brother's only child from whom she received comfort and support in her hour of need.

"The faithful Codicil warned me of the approaching crisis. He said that a day would arrive when I must appear from the shadow of my darkness. That you would soon be without a friend, and that, if a father closed his heart to a lovely and sorrowing daughter, where could she find shelter but among those from whom she ought to flee? I saw the justice of his reasoning and I consented to meet you at the garrison ball."

"Then the yearnings of my heart," exclaimed the affected Helena, "which I have made such fruitless efforts to reject, are not false. You are then, indeed, the stranger of that night?"

"I am, my love," replied the father. He arose. His form was no longer bent. He cast aside his beggar's coat and heavy shoes; he tore from his head the gray hair of a low wig. There he stood—the elegant man of the assembly. "I am that happy stranger. It was the first time your neglectful father had seen you since your birth. You revived in my memory the night I first met your lovely mother; but, what touched my heart most deeply was your devotion to a parent who had taken such a fatal step to be forgotten. You loved him whom you had not seen, simply because he *was* your parent. The faithfulness of your heart taught you to abandon affluence for the direst poverty, so that you were permitted to perform your duty to your father. You know not how keenly those sentiments entered the heart of a father who had not fulfilled a single duty of a parent to a child."

"In reference to your aunt, my last reproach to her has been spoken: it was in my appearance at the altar. I will not pursue my anger; I have no feelings of revenge. I can

not forget our early loves and mutual sorrows, nor how she contributed to my happiness; nor can I admit that her late unprincipled conduct has outweighed the care she has bestowed upon you for so many years; but, as soon as she is sufficiently recovered she must remove from this house. It shall not be a residence for the British Major; that innovation I can not permit. I will, however, settle a fortune upon her equal to that bequeathed her by her uncle, and which Morley wasted; but, it shall be secured unalienably to her and little Flora, who is out of the power of Major Gordon."

The narrative was followed by Helena's rehearsal of the past; she kept back nothing proper for a father to know, and not even her love for Captain Pembroke. Mr. Cavendish listened with great interest, and when his child confessed her love for the bold Light-horseman, a fine smile animated the face of her father—a smile of approval. Helena was indeed happy.

CHAPTER XIV

INEVITABLE FATE.

MAJOR GORDON scarcely knew whether his marriage was a matter of congratulation or regret. He did not view these sudden attacks of his wife without suspicion that they were occasioned by some unconfessed cause for which even her great reputed wealth might not fully compensate. He retired to his old quarters to pass his wedding-night in lonely thoughtfulness; and when, in the morning, he called at the residence which he regarded as his own, he found that his wife was still sleeping. The doctor pronounced her tranquil and much improved. He then determined, as was previously arranged, to visit Mr. Codicil, and enter at once upon important business matters.

The lawyer was in his office. As soon as the Major made known his object, Mr. Codicil placed before him a stupendous ledger, which, unfolding at a certain page, exhibited the

account with Mrs. Morley. The Major scrutinized it closely and then observed :

" This merely exhibits her annual expenditure, which certainly is enormous ; but I wish to see the source whence these receipts are drawn. Indeed, the whole extent and revenue of her property."

" Sir," replied the lawyer, " I have no account with Mrs. Morley but this which you see. The large amounts placed to her credit are merely gifts from the estate of Horace Cavenish."

" But that estate is hers," said the Major.

" There, sir, you are in error," said the lawyer. " It is true that he desired me to encourage this impression, even in his sister, and directed me to furnish funds to her to any amount, provided they were expended judiciously. He insisted that I should not restrain her in any extravagance and style of living that the estate would permit. But when he found that she was about to enter into a marriage with one who was comparatively unknown, and who had gained sufficient influence over her to induce her to refuse a settlement upon her penniless niece, and even to impeach *her legitimacy*—because she was the only person present at the marriage of her parents—he emerged from the darkness of his profound retirement. I warned Mrs. Morley that the dead would come to life if she persisted in her conduct, and I now have to inform you that *Horace Cavendish lives!* The same roof which covers the bed of penitence on which your wife is stretched, shelters the father of Helena, who is now too much alarmed for his daughter's happiness to contemplate retiring from the world again."

The Major listened with attention. He uttered no suspicion of the lawyer's statement ; but endeavored to support this adverse intelligence with soldierly fortitude. He bowed so politely, and retired so quietly, that even the imperturbable lawyer could not refuse some feelings of sympathy for his silent anguish. The Major hastened to his quarters to ruminate on his condition as a married man.

In the mean time Mrs. Gordon had awakened from her slumber, weak and prostrate, but recovered from her stupor. She cast her eyes from side to side ; no husband watched her

should be reoccupied by the revolutionary forces; Helen should be his. "And now, perhaps," he concluded, "you are still of opinion that 'I am old enough to use words of greater discretion' than than I have."

Poor Oscar recalled his words, revoked what he had alleged, and offered other atoning advances, which, according to the code of honor, were unbecoming a soldier and a gentleman, who is expected to fight in his wrong-headedness before he acknowledges himself in error—an act of justice to the injured party too often defeated by the duel.

After a few days' sojourn in the camp, which he passed in endeavoring to contribute to the comfort of the soldiers most distressed, Mr. Cavendish, still in the character of Wrecker, proceeded to Gray's Hill. He thought to reach the poor dwelling unheard; but the watchful ear of Spider was not to be deceived. He rushed from the house, and with a troubled and foreboding look, seized the arm of Wrecker, crying in an agitated voice:

"Come! come in, sir!"

Wrecker, alarmed, entered hastily, and in the inner room, stretched upon the pallet she always used, was Mother Gray, evidently in the agonies of death. She was wholly insensible and had been in this condition all the day, and the faithful boy, though terribly alarmed, would not quit her side. Within an hour after the arrival of Wrecker she breathed her last. The poor boy shed tears of sorrow; and Wrecker could not restrain that tribute to one who had been to him so uniformly kind. That night they made a coffin with boards that Spider had collected to repair the hut, and, in the morning committed the body to the earth, burying her beneath the floor of the cabin in which she had lived—so that her castle was her sepulcher.

When Spider removed the bed in which Mother Gray had died he found beneath it a mass of parchment. This he conveyed to Wrecker, who, upon examination, discovered that they contained *the stolen deeds of his father's property!* I soon appeared that the old woman with whom he had resided so long was, indeed, Margaret Dowlas, who, having abandoned her country with her pelf, had hidden in this obscure corner of the colony, and there had spent the remainder of her days.

in gloating over her deep revenge, her head in life and death being pillow'd by her felony. She had indulged her guilt until she became too imbecile to atone by penitence for her crime.

Wrecker now intimated to Spider that they must leave the hill, and that, in future, their residence would be in Philadelphia, at the house where he had first delivered the letter from Captain Pembroke. Spider was delighted. He soon carefully packed the parchments. Strapping them to his back he announced himself prepared for the journey; together they quitted the old cabin upon Gray's Hill. They reached Philadelphia in safety, and Helena welcomed them with a heart overflowing in its joy. Mrs. Gordon had removed to her husband's quarters; but Flora spent most of her time with Helena. The child hailed the reappearance of Spider with the utmost joy. Spider became the courier between Helena and Oscar. He passed and repassed sentinels as if he was invisible, and crossed the country in a manner that left him unrivaled in the achievement. Mr. Cavendish used to remark that he was like his type, the insect; that he would spin his web just where his wayward fancy might direct, and then he would follow in the face of every obstacle.

Winter passed away and summer came. It was thought that the British were uneasy in their conquest. It soon transpired that they contemplated a retreat. This was confirmed by their preparations for departure. Mr. Cavendish, feeling that Washington would intercept them, urged his sister to accept an asylum with him and Helena until there was less danger in joining Major Gordon. This kindness she readily accepted. The British determined to retreat by the Jerseys, and, on a given day, with a large baggage train, eight miles in length, they moved off. Washington, with all his available forces, watched them as they traveled, awaiting a favorable moment for attack.

The battle of Monmouth was fought in this retreat, when the British decamped in the night, leaving their dead and wounded on the field, and, by a singular coincidence, two of the latter were Major Gordon and Sergeant Holland, who had acted as a rear-guard, and were, therefore, in the hottest of

the fight. The Major, finding that he was fatally injured, sent for his wife, who arrived in time to spend a few hours by his side before he died. Oscar came to her support in her deep grief, and both were present when the Major sunk into his last slumber, begging Oscar to convey to his dear Cavendish relatives that he sincerely lamented that he had not fully estimated their value until it was too late to enjoy their love. Mr. Cavendish and Helena received the desolate Mrs. Gordon with open arms; the brother then declared that they would never part again; and the sister echoed "never" with all her heart. Mr. Cavendish applied for the custody of the prisoner Sergeant, pledging his parole for his safe keeping, which was readily conceded. The Sergeant was as much astounded as delighted at being transferred to such sumptuous quarters; but no inducement would alienate him from the sovereign whom he served. He was eventually exchanged, and when the war was ended proceeded to England with his regiment.

The victory was achieved which gave Oscar the right to claim his bride; but the respect due to the feelings of Mrs. Gordon caused the marriage to be deferred. In the succeeding winter, however, when active operations in the army were suspended, Oscar obtained leave of absence, and in that interval of holiday the marriage of these happy lovers took place. Mr. Cavendish dispatched Spider with an invitation to Ruth and Obadiah Prim. To his astonishment and gratification the Quakers attended. They refused, however, to participate in the "vanities" displayed in the ceremonies at the church; but did ample justice to the sumptuous breakfast. When the lingering guests abandoned the champagne, Obadiah was by no means the least merry of the party. Ruth was surprised at the loveliness of the bride, but she was still more impressed with the handsome bridegroom, whom, she believed, once regarded her with hopes that needed but encouragement.

When Oscar returned to the head of his gallant corps, Spider resumed the occupation of Mercury between this devoted pair, which he continued in defiance of all dangers until the war ended and Oscar returned. Then he turned his attention to the nursery. His long strides afforded such ease of motion to his body, that the children refused all other carriages for

Spider's arms, and, folded in his embrace, they were conveyed along the garden walks, for hours rambling in infantile enjoyment.

At the end of the war Mr. Cavendish and Codicil proceeded to England with their dusty parchments, with a memorial of their extraction from England and the circumstance of their disclosure in America. With these evidences the former soon obtained possession of his patrimony; but England was disastrous to him, and he sold the estate and returned to his beloved America.

Here he could reënjoy married life, too, in the happiness and devotion of Helena and Oscar, and youth in the sportiveness of their children. Flora married in due time, and the stern Mr. Codicil became so impressed with the virtues of Mrs. Gordon, that he, a bachelor of fifty-five, proposed for her hand: but that lady declined the honor, alleging that she had resolved to spend the remainder of her life beside her worthy brother, that, without the trespass of other feelings, their youth and their age might be closed by the same remembrance.

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